THE INVISIBLE CHRIST

RICARDO ROJAS

THE INVISIBLE CHRIST

RICARDO ROJAS,
1882 -

TRANSLATOR
WEBSTER E. BROWNING

INTRODUCTION
ROBERT E. SPEER

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INTRODUCTION

THE INVISIBLE CHRIST is a remarkable book, unique in itself and significant as an illustration of new trends of thought in Latin America. The author is Dr. Richard Rojas, lately Rector of the University of Buenos Aires, and one of the most conspicuous historians and men of letters in Latin America at the present time.

The book is notable as a piece of literature. The knowledge of art, and especially of the representations of Christ in art, which it reveals is amazing, and scarcely less remarkable is its acquaintance with the literature of other religions. The author "relates how for many years of his life he had sought to quench his spiritual thirst at the fountain of philosophy and Oriental lore. He read Genesis and the Koran, Plato and Kant, the mystic doctors and poets, from Pythagoras to Swedenborg. But he remained unsatisfied. His reason found nourishment in those pages, his imagination pleasure, but the living sense of God did not succeed in becoming incarnate in his life. In the Bhagavad-Gita of Hinduism he thought he found at length the oasis he was seeking in life's desert. He was initiated by the teaching of Krishna and the revelation of Arjuna into the scale of ascending yogas. He profited much at the time from those studies, but in the end he discovered in the Gospels and the 'spirit of Christ'

the sole satisfaction he had so restlessly pursued." Doctor Rojas has, as a result of this experience, his own distinctive insights and interpretations, and the views of art and religion and life which he sets forth here, whatever one's assent or dissent, are fascinatingly interesting.

Dr. John A. Mackay, one of the ablest Spanish scholars of our time, describes the book as "a series of three dialogues between the author and a Roman Catholic bishop who had invited him to be his guest among the mountains of his diocese. After supper each evening the friends discourse on the subject of Christ. The years pass; the good bishop finishes his course, and the author falls ill. It was during this illness, he tells us, that he experienced 'the intimate need of putting into writing these dialogues, as one who carries out an act of self-examination.' Like so many other sincere spirits of our time, he felt he could not be a man without coming face to face with the Man. The aim he set before him in this book was 'to endeavor to understand the Christian sentiment as the inspiration of life.' The resultant literary product is the record of a great spiritual quest, in which the author describes the stages of his soul's pilgrimage after the Christ, as well as the new religious viewpoint at which he arrived. The dialogue form gives special piquancy to the conflict of religious ideals, and is symbolic of a profound commotion that begins to surge in the depths of the Latin-American spirit."

The translator, Dr. Webster E. Browning, of Buenos Aires, has done his utmost to preserve the

literary taste and skill of the original and has so far succeeded that any English reader will feel the beauty and originality of the book as a piece of literature.

If one asks what kind of books Latin-American authors are producing, this volume will answer for the nobler and higher mind of the Continent. The fascination of the book to most readers will be its revelation of the reaction of the highest Latin culture of our day to the religious inheritance of Latin America and to Christianity itself and its historical and mystical elements. Doctor Rojas accepts the portrait of Jesus in the Gospels. He says for himself:

"Scientific criticism, so far from invalidating the text of the Gospels, has made them more human and forceful. Considered simply as historical documents they have recovered an authority which they had lost in the eyes of the incredulous. As a result of modern exegesis it would be as arbitrary to have doubts regarding them as it would be to doubt all the written sources of antiquity. If our skepticism leads us to suppress Christ, we might as well suppress Tiberius also and all the other personages of his epoch."

But while accepting, though perhaps not in the full evangelical sense, the historic representation of Christ, the chief concern of Doctor Rojas is with the mystical Christ of experience, "the Invisible Christ." And here he has many alliances with Paul's view. "The body of each man," says Rojas, "can and should be the dwelling place of the invisible

Christ"; and again, "Christ is a fountain of living water that overflows the immobile vessels that contain it in order to fertilize the spirit of man." "The Master said, 'Come unto me and drink.' That is what I do." "But in order that we may live in him and he in us it is necessary to make alive his message."

Perhaps enough has been said to prepare the reader for the experience that is before him in this book. He is to find something different from anything he has ever met before. Whether he agrees or disagrees with Señor Rojas' views he will be brought into touch with a distinctive and significant movement of the religious spirit in Latin America. It is a movement full of promise and hope. There are many ways of returning to Jesus, but the essential thing is that they shall lead to him. Perhaps this is a way that will be found congenial to many minds in Latin America. It leaves unsolved many problems, but if it really brings men to the Christ of the New Testament, it will have accomplished the essential thing, and the Christ of the New Testament, the living Christ, "the same yesterday, to-day and forever," will lighten whatever is dark and strengthen whatever is weak and lift up whatever is cast down.

ROBERT E. SPEER.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR

Ricardo Rojas was born on September 16, 1882, in Tucuman, one of the oldest cities of Argentina, and from early colonial times a center of intense culture and conservative religiosity. His father, at the time of his death, in 1893, was a national senator, and had previously served his country as a member of the House of Deputies and governor of his province.

It is related of the son that he began to attend school when but three years of age, and that he could read and write at four. At fifteen he began the publication of poems and short articles on various subjects, and from that time to the present his literary activity has never flagged.

In 1928 Doctor Rojas was tendered a mammoth popular demonstration of homage and affection, on the occasion of his having completed twenty-five years as a writer. This was held in the great Colón Theater, of Buenos Aires, and was attended by the president of the Republic, his ministers of state, and more than three thousand other representatives of the highest culture of the country. The chief speaker was the minister of public instruction, and in his address, making reference to El Cristo Invisible, which had just appeared, he urged the author to "keep on singing of 'the victory of man'

and of the eternal Spirit of the invisible Christ which is fertilizing the generations of the present and the future with good and truth and beauty."

In 1922, as a reward for his notable work on Argentine literature, he was given the National Prize in Literature, which had been instituted by the National Congress and consisted of $30,000 (Argentine currency). The Spanish literary critic, Américo Castro, in a study published in the *Revista de Filosofia,* of Madrid, Spain, gives it as his opinion that no other work of equal merit has been published in Latin America.

Doctor Rojas is an honorary member of the Royal Academy and of the Academy of History, of Spain; of the *Legion d'Honneur,* and the *Société des Américanistes,* in France; of the Hispanic Society of America, and of the Associated Teachers of Spanish, in the United States; of the Historical and Geographical Institute, in Uruguay; of the Academies of Mexico and Venezuela; and of the principal literary, artistic, and scientific societies in his own country.

In addition, he is Doctor, *honoris causa,* in Philosophy and Letters, of the Universities of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; San Marcos de Lima, Peru; and Buenos Aires, Argentina. He became Rector of the University of Buenos Aires, after having served it during many years as professor, member of the Council, and Dean. He also holds the chair of Spanish and Argentine Literature, in the same University, and, in former years, taught in the University of La Plata and other institutions, giving courses

on the history of civilization and the history of art. He has recently been invited to give a course of lectures in the University of Madrid.

It will be interesting to note that El Cristo Invisible is being translated into French and Italian. This book and the unusual reception accorded it, in the midst of a society which, as pointed out by Doctor Rojas, is not given to seeking its inspiration in the Scriptures, are of immense value as showing that, although there may be a wide distrust of organized Christianity as it is known in South America, there is, nevertheless, deep down in the heart of even the most thoughtless, a hunger for a more intimate relation with the invisible Christ. Latin America feels but little need of the pale Nazarene, anæmic, blood-stained, and defeated, unsuited to be a helper in life's daily struggle and toil, but it has opened wide its arms to the Invisible Christ who satisfies heart-hunger, who walks with man and talks with man and calls him friend.

It is but a truism to say that every piece of writing translated from the original into another tongue necessarily loses some of its former strength and beauty. This well-known fact seems to be particularly true when applied to a work translated from one of the Romance tongues into a colder and less elastic Nordic language. Spanish, in particular, has a style, a psychology, a wealth of rhetorical expression peculiarly its own, and anything written in that language loses much of its original beauty of expression when compressed into our more concise and much less rhetorical English speech.

As already suggested, Doctor Rojas is a master of the Spanish language, and in no one of his many books does this mastery appear to greater advantage than in EL CRISTO INVISIBLE. Consequently, it is probable that the work has lost some of his literary style in passing from the original into English. But it is hoped that the thought has been carefully preserved, and the indulgent reader is asked to search for that rather than for the superb rhetoric, the rhythm and poetic imagery which characterize the original and make its reading a delight.

I have been most fortunate in being able to consult the author, who, as the work progressed, went over the entire translation, chapter by chapter, and made many helpful suggestions as to delicate shades of meaning and subtleties of expression in the original which might otherwise have failed to find their equivalent in the English version.

I am also under particularly heavy obligation to my friend, Dr. John A. Mackay, one of the Continental secretaries of the Young Men's Christian Association, and to my wife. The former carefully went over the first crude draft of the translation and made many happy suggestions as to phraseology and meaning. The latter has edited the final copy with extreme care.

Final revision is left to Dr. John Orts Gonzalez, of New York City, who, because of his deep knowledge of the two languages and of the subject-matter, is eminently fitted to give to the translation its finishing touches.

I have done this work with deep personal interest,

with no other desire than that of putting this piece of unusual writing into the hands of English readers. It comes from the pen of one of the master writers and thinkers of the Latin world of to-day and merits attention from readers of all nationalities who are interested in the Invisible Christ of whom he sings.

It must be stated, in concluding this Note, that quotations from the Bible, although taken from a Roman Catholic version in the original, in the translation, with but one or two exceptions, have been taken from the Authorized Version, which is the one that is best known to readers of the English Bible. A careful comparison of passages quoted shows that in no case has there been a sacrifice or violation of the original meaning, since, after all, the two versions are much less at variance than is generally supposed.

W. E. B.

Buenos Aires.

PREFACE

THE three dialogues that form this volume give, in what might be called a somewhat familiar style, the essence of three conversations which I sustained with a provincial bishop of the Roman Catholic Church in one of the provinces of Argentina, in his private residence in the hills where he was accustomed to spend his summers.

I happened to be, at the time, in the capital of his diocese, also on vacation, and a friend, a nephew of the Bishop, invited me to visit his uncle's home, which was famous in the mountain region both for the beauty of the surrounding scenery and the hospitality of the owner.

The house of the Bishop, as it was called locally, was of colonial construction, with stone foundations and half-arched doors, whitened walls, and a roof of red tiles which had been worn smooth by the rain. A gallery of Solomonic pillars, carved from native woods by Indian workmen, surrounded the entire building, providing the rooms within with shade and coolness. From the outer garden, in which there were many rosebushes, and two great trees of a native variety, one could gaze across the whole valley and listen to the murmur of the peaceful little river as it went tumbling down the rocky gorge.

A sister of the Bishop, the mother of three chil-

dren, the eldest of them my friend, was in charge of the house. She was always dressed in black, in memory of her husband, who had been dead many years, and her garments, something like those worn by Spanish nuns, deepened the pallor of her face in contrast to the austerity of her person. She ruled both in the pantry and in the oratory—Mary for devotion and Martha for household duties—lending to the home a sense of purity which was like spiritual aroma. The servants, all of them of mixed ancestry, adored her, since she cared for them as a part of the family, in the patriarchal Roman custom still followed on some of the great farms in the interior of the country.

On the first day of my visit, at the beginning of breakfast, the guests all rose to their feet to make the sign of the cross and repeat a prayer of thanksgiving. His Reverence then blessed the bread, in memory of the Last Supper of Jesus, and gave it to the guests, as is done in the refectories of convents. In addition to the Bishop and the immediate members of his family, the housekeeper and her children were seated at the table, and I was the only one present who might have been considered an outsider. His Reverence was clothed in his episcopal garments, which, with their bright reflection, lit up his still youthful and ruddy face, in spite of gray hairs which silvered his head, although he was but fifty years of age.

On the afternoon of the first day of my visit, while riding on horseback in the hills, my friend, the nephew of the Bishop, said to me: "My uncle was

asking me about your religious views, as he noticed that you did not cross yourself at the breakfast table. I wish you would discuss with him some of the things I have heard you touch upon in your conversations with others about Christ. I know he is anxious to hear you."

That night, after supper, the other guests left me alone with the master of the house, and we then began the Christian dialogues which are recorded in this volume.

The Bishop was a man of great native talent and wide reading. He had studied theology in Rome and had a thorough knowledge of Italian art. In his youth he had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The people of his diocese reverenced him because of his wisdom as a counselor, and admired him because of his eloquence as a preacher. Something of all this appeared in his conversation; his gestures were measured and gentle, his voice well modulated, his expressions showed deep learning, and his mind was vigilant to defend his faith, although, when we ended our conversations, I could see that he was inclined to forgive my heresies.

Just before my visit I had, by unusually good fortune, secured a very old painting, which I still have. The canvas represents the Holy Trinity in the attitude of crowning the Virgin, who is enthroned on the clouds of heaven. It is of archæological interest because of its native coloring and simple technique, the harmonious blending of its ideas and its hieratic lines, which remind one somewhat of European paintings, although it is evidently of colonial

origin, from one of the missions founded by the Jesuit fathers in Peru.

But the most remarkable thing about this painting is the *motif*, for the three Persons of the Trinity are represented by three identical Persons, in literal transcription of the dogma: three personalities, represented by an identical human figure. The three, with simultaneous movement, are in the act of crowning the mother, the virgin and fruitful substance of the Cosmos. I do not recall having seen anything like it in the museums or churches of Europe, and I secured possession of the painting in the capital of the province because of my interest in Christian iconography, a subject that has attracted me for many years. And, having shown this painting to the Bishop, we began to discuss the changes that images used in worship have undergone within the church during past centuries. This was the origin of our first conversation, in regard to the image of Christ, and which took place, as I have said, at the close of the meal, when his Reverence and I were left alone.

The second conversation was held in the study of his Reverence, on the following night, after supper. In this room there were a number of small and very rare native idols which had been unearthed in the nearby hills when excavations were being made for the construction of a canal. Near them, on the shelves of the library, were a number of books on mysticism and theology, among which I recall the *Letters* of the mystic Juan de Avila, a small volume of Kempis, and the *City of God*, by Saint Augus-

tine. On the desk where the Bishop did his work I noticed a magnificent copy of the Holy Bible, and another of the *Life, Virtues, and Miracles of the Apostle of Peru, the venerable father Francisco Solano, of the Seraphic Order of Saint Francis, written by Fray Diego Córdoba, a native of Lima,* as is stated on the cover of the edition of 1643. I remarked to his Reverence that I also possessed a copy of this work, bound in old parchment like his own, and this greatly pleased him. And, while we enjoyed the flavor of a cup of fragrant coffee of Yungas, we began to discuss the books in the room and finally turned the conversation to the Gospels. It was in this way that our second conversation began, in which we discussed the Word of Christ, and it lasted until midnight.

The third evening, the last that I spent in the home of the Bishop, we went out after supper and sat in the garden. It was Sunday, and in the morning he had held mass in the oratory which was attended by all the good people of the farm. For this reason we began to discuss the faith of the Indians who were Christianized during the colonial period; Spanish-American Catholicism, infused with Spanish fanaticism and native fetishism; and finally turned to a consideration of the Roman liturgy and the mission of the Redeemer. The evening was calm, the air was redolent with the simple perfumes of the country, and in the silence of the night the constellations glowed above the tops of the mountains and seemed to transmit to us something of their mystery. In this way, our third conversation, in

which we spoke of the Spirit of Christ, as we sat out under the flaming Southern Cross, luminous as an opportune symbol, was begun and finished.

It is evident that in setting down the version of these three conversations, in book form, it has been necessary to reconstruct them in the interests of dialectic clarity and to secure a more harmonious arrangement of the material. Thanks to a good memory and to notes which I had carefully taken in my traveler's notebook, I have been able to keep close to the argument and give with all possible fidelity the ideas of my interlocutor, who, in the text, appears under his title of "Bishop," while I designate myself simply as the "Guest." The written version of the conversations, it may be said, corresponds to what was really spoken in the way that a geometrized figure corresponds to a living model. The quotations, for example, were sometimes read from the books we had at hand, although the allusions were generally fragmentary or reminiscent. In the pages of the book I have copied them down from the original sources, in order to secure the greatest possible accuracy when this seemed necessary to give authority to the story.

I postponed for some time the writing out of these conversations, until, quite recently, finding myself ill, I realized the necessity of doing so—much as one carries out an act of self-examination. I have made use of no literary artifice, not even in the adoption of the triple plan: the Image of Christ, which treats of the Son and of the Cross; the Word of Christ, which treats of the Father and the Word;

and the Spirit of Christ, which deals with the Messiah and the redemption of man. The dialogue form, which is helpful when the conversation takes the form of a controversy, comes, as I have stated, from the real form of the conversations in the first place; and the two speakers who take part tacitly presuppose a third person—the reader—who is considered conversant with the Gospels, mentally alert, and taking part in the discussion, in order that the doctrine may awaken his own sentiment.

I do not know what value this work, whose title, THE INVISIBLE CHRIST, runs through the dialogues and permeates their deepest thought, may have in the mind of the reader. The mysticism which is so manifest in its pages is not unknown in my former books, and the knowledge shown as to the subject matter is not mere improvisation. Having given much time to the study of Spanish literature, as an active teacher during a period of twenty years, I have specialized in Spanish mysticism and entered into the "Mansions" of Santa Teresa, meditating with Fray Luis de León on *The Names of Christ*, with Fray Luis de Granada on *The Symbol of the Faith*, and with Calderón on *The Sacramental Representations*. Later on I investigated the origins of Argentine culture, penetrating into the intimacies of the Christian conquest and the liberal reaction against Catholicism. Meanwhile, because of my interest in art, I took notes on Christian iconography, during my travels, and, because of my intellectual inclination, I included Oriental metaphysics in my reading. Studies in folklore, in occultism, and in the history

of religions have also aided in defining the ideal which I set forth in this book.

I beg of Catholics not to condemn me as a heretic, and of heretics not to condemn me because of what they may consider superstition. The errors I may have committed in the dialectic mechanism and in the doctrinal exegesis are less important than the sincerity with which I have sought to fathom and comprehend Christian sentiment as inspiration for life. This is the theme of THE INVISIBLE CHRIST, and the deeply spiritual incentive of him who wrote it.

My interlocutor in these dialogues, who is no longer living, held me, even until his death, in benevolent sympathy, perhaps with the secret hope of converting me, one day, to his own faith. For this reason, as I conclude this prologue, my memory goes back to that last evening spent with him, when the dark mountains lifted their high peaks in clear outline on the horizon of the valley, standing out against the night sky with a diaphaneity that was truly startling. I was talking that night about religious sentiment in the two Americas, pointing out the superficiality of worship and of life in the Argentine soul of our time.

RICARDO ROJAS.

I

THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

The Master says, "I am the way . . ."

I

THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

GUEST

The image of God has not been invariable in the Catholic Church, in spite of strict ecclesiastical discipline.

BISHOP

You make a rather rash statement, my friend.

GUEST

It is well proved, Your Grace, by the *Trinity* which I showed you this morning. In that picture, the dove, the symbol of the Spirit, has been eliminated, and Jehovah, generally depicted as an old man, has been supplanted by a bearded youth with a mane of black locks.

BISHOP

I have been thinking about that archaic figure. God, the Father, it is true, has always been represented by a patriarchal figure, since the Hebrews called Jehovah the "Ancient of Days"; and the Holy Spirit, the "Breath of God," as the prophet calls him, has always been represented under the figure of a dove which was seen to come down from heaven, when John the Forerunner baptized Jesus, as described in the Gospel.

GUEST

The variations noted in this painting, whose authenticity as a product of colonial days cannot be discussed, might be explained by saying that the dove was eliminated in order that the Indians might not be tempted to fall into the sin of animal worship, and this, in all probability, led to the identifying of the three Persons of the Trinity in the traditional figure of the Christ of liturgy.

BISHOP

God the Father is Christ in him; God the Son is Christ by him; and the Holy Spirit, Christ with him. . . This explains the painting you have shown me.

GUEST

I find my historical explanation as acceptable as your theological interpretation; but both equally corroborate the thesis that there have been varied representations of the Divinity in the iconography of Catholic worship.

BISHOP

The Church has not authorized these changes, although it may consent to them when they are not contrary to its dogma. Furthermore, the painting of which we are speaking is an exceptional document.

GUEST

No, Your Grace: an engraving of the "Foundling Children," reproduced in the *Bibliography of the Printing Press in the region of the Rio de la Plata,*

the famous work of Medina, represents the same conception; Dr. Estanislao Zeballos also owned a painting similar to mine, and the archæologist, Dr. Juan Ambrosetti, had another, although of lesser dimensions. Mine is not the only one of its kind in the country.

BISHOP

Can that be true?

GUEST

I have seen the originals.

BISHOP

But nothing of the kind is to be found in Europe, and this "Trinity," which we will call "American," merely proves the caution which the Church was forced to use in presenting dogma to the rudimentary conscience of the Indians.

GUEST

Such didactic caution has given origin, in this case, as you see, to a more logical representation of the "Trinity," and, it may be, a more profound interpretation, than the European "Trinities."

BISHOP

This may be true, at least for certain fantastic minds.

GUEST

And then, how can we deny that those three bearded youths in my painting, with dark locks hanging down over pale brows, and white robes

with scarlet folds, transfer the symbol of Jehovah and that of the dove to the human image of Jesus, identifying in his image the images of the three persons?

BISHOP

The Messiah was the Father manifested in the Son, and the Son did his work under inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

GUEST

That is true, in effect; but the forms of Divinity are not unchangeable, according to these documents, since the image of the Son may be the image of the Father and also of the Spirit.

BISHOP

The Father and the Spirit are ineffable in themselves, although Christ is all that manifested in Jesus.

GUEST

In that case, Jesus would be visible, and Christ invisible.

BISHOP

Perhaps.

GUEST

According to that, the image of Jesus, at least, ought to be unchangeable in the Church, but this has not been the case.

BISHOP

The worship of images has caused much trouble in the Church, even from the earliest times.

GUEST

Multiple images of God are like multiple names to designate him, and were invented by the literary inspiration of the mystics. Fray Luis de León wrote many learned dialogues in his book, *The Names of Christ,* explaining the meaning of the various names which the Scriptures give the Messiah.

BISHOP

The Scriptures call Christ: Way, Bridegroom, Lamb, Mountain, Shepherd, King, Prince of Peace, Arm of God, Son of God, and Faces of God, as when the psalmist says to the Eternal, "Show us thy faces and we shall be saved," or when Isaiah says to him, "Before thy faces the mountains melted."

GUEST

These images of the Scriptures are, then, like the images of the liturgy, and Fray Luis says that the term "faces" is employed because God has many countenances or appearances. All these must be reduced to Invisible Unity, without form and without name, since such names were given in a frenzy of ecstasy and human effort to express the Ineffable. In the Song of Songs, the Spouse, the Beloved, who, according to the Church, is Christ, suggests images of a dangerous sensuality, if the text is to be taken literally. For that reason Luis de León says with Paul, "Christ is the image of the invisible God," and makes this comment: "For God, who is not seen, is shown by this image, since it is the duty of

this image to bring to light and set before the eyes of the public that which without it is hidden." But Jesus himself being God, the same must be said of his body in the varied representations of Christian iconography, which are similar, in that respect, to those of the Scriptures, because of their metaphorical and allegorical expressions.

BISHOP

It is undoubtedly true that only our religion, so full of eternal truths, has been able to suggest to man so many expressions to represent and name the Creator, who, although he is one, reveals himself in the multitude of his creatures; "symbols of faith," as Father Granada rightly called them.

GUEST

Pardon me, Your Grace, if at this point I take the liberty of rectifying you; the use of a multiplicity of images, in the language of the mystics and in the religious iconography which they inspire, is common to all religions.

BISHOP

To all?

GUEST

The Koran, for example, alludes to God as a Being of very many beautiful names.

BISHOP

Oh! the Koran!

GUEST

In the Hindu dialogue of the *Bâhagavad Ghita,*

Krishna calls God: Supreme Soul, Lord of the Holy Union, Ancient Principle, Indivisible, Time, Vishnu, Kala, and Mountain of Light resplendent on every side. As you see, the divine names in Hindu mysticism are but little different from those employed in Christian mysticism. And when the Blessed Man, rising to intimate perfection by the annihilation of the corporal and worldly, comes to contemplate the Supreme Unity of the Universe and wishes to describe the August Figure, that which he sees without having been seen appears to us a Being of multiple eyes, of innumerable arms, of a face turned in every direction and shrouded in the light of multiple suns, for the source of light which fills all space between the earth and the heavens is outside and inside all beings.

BISHOP

The Hindus have given monstrous representations to Divinity.

GUEST

Such a vision of the *Bâhagavad* is but little different from others described in the *Apocalypse,* whose deceptive appearances can be explained only by symbolism, as Swedenborg, the Swedish mystic, has done in his *Arcana Coelestia.* But, no sooner have the plastic arts taken possession of one and the other than they create monstrous idols, confining God in gross matter, although with the intention of elevating the matter of man to the subtleties of the spirit, which is incorporeal and invisible.

BISHOP

The visions of the *Apocalypse* cannot be compared to the monsters of the Gentiles.

GUEST

Many pre-Colombian gods of America, such as the anthropomorphic sun found in Tiahuanacu and the goddess Teatlicué in Mexico, seem to be monsters like the Greek Chimera and the Egyptian Sphinx; but they are plastic expressions of profound conceptions, common to all ancient religions, under different symbols which for many people are capricious or impenetrable.

BISHOP

Representation is simplified, in the case of Jesus Christ, since he is the God-Man.

GUEST

It is not simplified to the extent that we may elude the problem.

BISHOP

The image of Jesus, profusely scattered throughout the world by the Church, has served since the first centuries of our era, to represent God the Father under the human figure of God the Son, in whom we all recognize the Founder of our religion.

GUEST

The image of Jesus has given people a conviction of historic truth and human reality, which is the foundation of Christianity in its beginnings,

better than simple oral evocation could give them; but it occurs to me to say that as there has been a long discussion in regard to the authenticity of the written documents which form the New Testament, the value of Christian iconography might be equally discussed.

BISHOP

It is easy to argue; the difficulty is to do so with some reason.

GUEST

I could present serious reasons for discussing the origin, identity, and meaning of Christian iconography.

BISHOP

What are those reasons?

GUEST

It would be enough for me to ask if there was a portrait of Jesus which could have served as the model of the first representations of Christ, in order to prove something certain as to the antiquity and value of that plastic document.

BISHOP

These are serious questions which you bring up, and they are not easily answered; but it occurs to me to say that the image of Jesus Christ is known all over the world, and that it has existed from very earliest times.

GUEST

That is true; and now I ask you to recall if the many images of Jesus Christ, which you have used

in the exercise of your holy ministry, reproduce an original model, an initial prototype, consecrated by ecclesiastical authority.

BISHOP

Consecrated in a definite manner, that I cannot say; consecrated by the consent of a tradition two thousand years old, yes!

GUEST

Please tell me which one.

BISHOP

The miraculous image of Veronica, painted with the sweat and blood of our Lord, which fact makes it an authentic portrait, as old as the model itself.

GUEST

Allow me to say that I doubt this.

BISHOP

You may do so.

GUEST

Was there really a woman who dried the sweating, bleeding face of Jesus?

BISHOP

Great heavens! How can you doubt it!

GUEST

According to the tradition, a lady of high lineage left her palace and came down into the street to wipe the blood and sweat from the face of Jesus, when he was passing by on his way to Calvary. It was a pious custom in Jerusalem to perform a sim-

ilar act for persons who had been condemned to the cross. But the canonical Gospels do not give the name of Veronica; they do not even refer to the incident, nor do they affirm that the image of the face of the Master was imprinted on a cloth with which it was dried. All this springs from other sources, less authoritative, which give to the woman the name of Berenice, or Veronike, from which there comes, as affirmed by Meille in a book of undoubted worth, the name of Veronica, the equivalent of *Vero-ikon,* the true ikon, the authentic portrait, according to a certain barbaric etymology. As you see, we walk here in the uncertain zone of myths. A single word may create a legend.

BISHOP

But the cloth exists, and the image is still visible, although somewhat faded through the centuries that have gone by. The cloth is kept in Rome.

GUEST

Yes. It is kept there. I have seen it in Saint Peter's.

BISHOP

Oh! Then why do you doubt?

GUEST

Because the stamping of the image on the cloth and its preservation through so many centuries seem most extraordinary.

BISHOP

There were more extraordinary facts in the life

of our Lord, and it is not impossible for faith to accept this image, since everything connected with the life of Christ was marvelous.

GUEST

I understand that the Church, basing its decisions on tradition, or on private evidence it has in its possession, could, if it wished, consecrate the portrait of Veronica as the only source of Christian iconography, and yet it has not done so. On the contrary, it has left liturgic art in complete liberty of creation and interpretation.

BISHOP

The Church never makes a mistake.

GUEST

I grant that this may be true, and I would like to know the reason for its attitude in this case.

BISHOP

I am merely a humble servant of the faith, and I would never dare to interpret designs which come from the Highest and which have for the true believer all the authority of sacred mysteries. Let that be done by the proud in spirit and the pedantic in knowledge.

GUEST

I see that, without reason, you are becoming impatient, Your Grace. I am not proud in spirit, nor am I pedantic. I am seeking knowledge with true humility and I am ready to accept the wisdom of those who, because of their priestly ministry, could

calm my doubts, just as Jesus, in the night described in the Gospel, quelled the tempestuous waters of Gennesaret.

BISHOP

I am not impatient, and I even declare that I listen to you with pleasure, because erudition and wit merit attention; but I grieve to see how the most beautiful spirits are misled when they break away from our church.

GUEST

If I am the strayed sheep, of which the Gospel speaks, it is the duty of the good shepherd to bring me back to the fold.

BISHOP

Greatly would I like to do this for you.

GUEST

I merely ask why the Church, which has adopted a canon for the Gospels, and with its authority protected the accepted versions of the original texts, did not also sanction a canon for the bodily figure of Jesus.

BISHOP

I have said that the figure stamped on the cloth of Veronica is the true image, the *vera efigies,* the most authentic, as it is the oldest portrait of our Lord.

GUEST

Then it ought to be officially proclaimed the prototype of all images, the historic model of all later

iconography. But I have seen that portrait, and I can assure you that, in view of its faded condition, it is impossible to determine what Christ looked like.

BISHOP

You perplex me!

GUEST

Does that portrait represent a man who was fair or dark?

BISHOP

I do not know.

GUEST

It is impossible to know, and, for that reason, although the image of Veronica has deeply influenced the work of later artists, no one has reproduced it exactly, and many have gone far away from the original, with a liberty which the Church would not permit, for example, in the translation of a text of the Gospel.

BISHOP

To what works do you refer?

GUEST

I refer to an anonymous French painting of the fifteenth century, which does not have the crown of thorns and which represents the face of the Master altogether serene and undisturbed, a different figure from that which was painted by Quentin Matsys and is shown to-day in the Museum of Antwerp, which has the crown of thorns and shows the face

of the Lord all marred with the anguish of his martyrdom. I could cite, also, the work of William of Cologne, in the gallery of Munich, in which the crown is very carefully put on and the hair tidily arranged, and the "Ecce Homo" of Gabriel May, which has but a bare suggestion of a crown on the head, and pictures the matted hair hanging loose, while the whole figure is sketchy and vague as in a dream. I recall, finally, another of Crivelli, which is kept in the collection of Malaspina, of Pavia, in which the head of Jesus appears bound about with a kind of Moorish turban. All these pretend to reproduce the image of Veronica; yet they are not copies of the supposed original, and are painted from human models which differ among themselves both as to color and facial characteristics.

BISHOP

Possibly no one of these images has been employed in the public worship of the Church.

GUEST

They have, at least, been used for worship in private chapels.

BISHOP

You are too subtle in your distinctions.

GUEST

Not so subtle as the scholastics.

BISHOP

More subtle than they. You made a mistake in your vocation.

GUEST

Do not become ironical about holy things, Your Grace; especially if you think that by so doing you may escape giving an answer to my opinions.

BISHOP

I am not trying to escape replying to you, since I have resigned myself to hear your questions. On the other hand, you know so much that you answer yourself. If it were not so, I would dare, now that you object to the figure of Veronica, to remind you of the portrait attributed to Saint Luke.

GUEST

It is so attributed, but without proofs, since the portrait to which you refer was made from a different model than the one in Rome attributed to Saint Peter.

BISHOP

I do not remember that one.

GUEST

It was found in the Church of Saint Praside, and it was declared that Saint Peter himself, while he was the guest of a certain Prudence, had drawn it on the wall of the Roman house where the temple was afterward erected, in an attempt to picture his divine Master as he remembered him.

BISHOP

I confess that I do not recall having seen it.

GUEST

A very interesting album of Christian iconog-

raphy includes it. It is a mere sketch, very much confused, in bare outlines, and is based on no definite model. From it one could not even tell whether Christ was beardless or bearded.

BISHOP

We might also adduce the portrait attributed to King Abgar, which, as I have read, is kept in the Church of Saint Bartholomew of the Armenians, a temple in Genoa, and is based on the traditional type.

GUEST

I was not able to see this when in Genoa. In the cathedral of that city, on the other hand, the plate from which Jesus ate during the last supper, as some say, is preserved, although others declare that it is the cup, the legendary Holy Grail, in which Joseph of Arimathæa caught the blood of the Crucified. This cup, or plate, is said to have been brought from Cæsarea, in 1101, and was broken when Napoleon ordered it taken to Paris. Travelers learn this from their Baedeker, and ask to be allowed to see the relic, as in other cases. But all this is a beautiful tradition, like that of King Abgar.

BISHOP

You are an incorrigible skeptic.

GUEST

You well know, Your Grace, that Abgar was supposed to have been a king of Mesopotamia and, finding himself sick, sent for Jesus to come and cure him, since the fame of the Messiah had

reached Abgar and he believed in him. When Jesus came to the house of the king, the painter Ananias made a portrait of him, according to one version; but, according to another, Jesus wiped his face with a handkerchief of the king and left his image printed on it, as in the case of Veronica. In his book, the *Marvelous Life of Jesus,* Seche affirms that this supposed portrait comes from an apocryphal text of the fifteenth century, and the incident is not mentioned in the Gospels.

BISHOP

So great is your skepticism, that, I infer, you would not believe in the portrait known as the "Emerald," so called because it is carved in that precious stone.

GUEST

I do not know the original, but I have seen some copies: the technique is perfect, and the image there represented has the ideal characteristics which the art of the Renaissance fixed on as essential. It is sufficient to make this observation to recognize that it is not a work contemporary with Jesus, as tradition pretends.

BISHOP

Nevertheless, tradition assures us that Tiberius Cæsar had it made in order to conserve the image of the God-Man who died during his reign. Afterward, it is said to have belonged to the Emperor of Constantinople, who, about the fifteenth century, gave it to Pope Innocent VIII, to ransom a

brother. As you see, the facts given are very concrete.

GUEST

That is what renders the tradition suspicious. So many concrete facts without proof, coming down to us through fifteen hundred years of such vicissitudes, make one suspect a historical fraud.

BISHOP

Against strong external proofs you set up a simple personal doubt.

GUEST

My doubt is based on the fact itself. The technique of the carving and the appearance of the figure, without taking into the account the type of the supposed model, prove that it is the work of neither a pagan artist nor of an unskilled workman. It belongs to the period of the Renaissance and was made, perhaps, in Constantinople, if not in Venice, whence it probably comes.

BISHOP

It is useless to continue, since no historical document satisfies you.

GUEST

I am looking only for that which would have satisfied the Church; but the Church, dogmatic in everything else, has maintained a profound silence on this point.

BISHOP

It has not kept silence, since it preserves, in the greatest temple in Rome, the cloth of Veronica, on

whose surface there was painted, nineteen centuries ago, the face of the Nazarene.

GUEST

Doubtless, that portrait, among all those which you recall, is the one which has had greatest authority in tradition; but it would not be honest to assert that in the faded outlines of that holy relic one can to-day see a portrait, or even a figure of finished lines and exact coloring. On the other hand, I insist on reminding you that not one of the four Gospels mentions this reputed miracle.

BISHOP

In it you have the face of a man, a face harmonious in its lines, with long flowing hair and well-trimmed beard, just as we have traditionally thought of our Lord.

GUEST

It is possible that the image may correspond to the tradition, to-day universal, which represents Jesus as a bearded Man, whose long, flowing locks throw into bold outline a well-modeled head; but it would not be possible, with only the present blurred image as a basis, to decide whether the original model was dark or fair, whether he had red or dark hair, a smooth or wrinkled brow, eyes blue or chestnut-brown, cheeks blond or dark, nose straight or aquiline, and even less indication does it give as to age, race, or stature of the Nazarene. Although this relic may be sufficiently expressive to serve as an evocation of a human archetype, or of

a divine martyr, it does not, on the other hand, convey a sufficiently definite conviction as to the portrait of any single individual, since it leaves in doubt many of the characteristics which would give him a distinct individuality. And that is what I am searching for: the human figure of Jesus, as the evocation of his superhuman personality.

BISHOP

In that case, would the Church have done better had it taken no notice of the cloth of Veronica?

GUEST

On the contrary, if there were sufficient proofs, it should have consecrated it as the only official relic; and if the image was sufficiently clear in former ages, it should have given us in that figure the pictorial prototype which we to-day lack.

BISHOP

In that case, Christian art would have remained sterile during the centuries in which it most flourished.

GUEST

If the Church has preferred to allow liberty in art, it must have had some motive, since it has always proceeded under the inspiration of well-determined motives.

BISHOP

What motive could it have had in this case?

GUEST

The fecundity of the myth in its effect on the soul.

BISHOP

The myth, do you say?

GUEST

Do not be startled, Your Grace. I am not proclaiming a heresy. When I say myth, I mean spirit. But it will be better not to enter into explanations just now. I trust that we may be able to understand each other, if we go deeply into the matter. Art may sometimes be a message from invisible worlds.

BISHOP

In that case, perhaps we can at once come to an understanding, inasmuch as in the iconography of the Catacombs there also appears the bearded face which Veronica wiped with her cloth.

GUEST

I visited the Catacombs of Rome, twenty years ago, when I was just beginning these studies. I know, especially, those of Saint Calixtus and their profuse imagery. I remember perfectly well the bearded *Christs* in the ancient crypts, in which, as I passed through, I recalled to mind the drama of the persecutions, when the Church, then but half-organized, aimed at nothing more than self-defense.

BISHOP

Those were heroic times, in which, according to the *Octavius* of Minutus Felix, referred to by Batiffol in his book, *L'Eglise naissante,* the Church was called *factis illicita, profana conjuratio, execrando consensio,* as though it were a secret sect of

evildoers. Such was the condition of things in the difficult period of the Catacombs.

GUEST

In their subterranean galleries I felt the emotion that is produced by recalling authentic and remote happenings. In these caves Christianity had its beginning, but with the new faith there were mingled hurtful remnants of the old, and also legends of Judaism, and symbols of Roman paganism. Furthermore, do not forget that in the Catacombs Christ is represented under the emblem of a Fish and of a Lamb.

BISHOP

The letters in the Greek word for "Fish" formed a hieroglyphic of the name of Christ, and the Lamb was an emblem of sacrificial kindness.

GUEST

Perhaps the human figure is also a symbol, that is to say, a veil that covers that which cannot be expressed in forms.

BISHOP

I see that you know the most venerable things of Christian origin, but have no love for them.

GUEST

If I had felt no love for them, I would not have gone on a pilgrimage for the purpose of knowing them. I visited the Catacombs, where I studied the oldest images of Christ, and then I had recourse to oratories, libraries, and museums, looking always

for representations of the God-Man, from miniatures in missals to sculptures in millennial basilicas. I did not carry out these studies for the vanity of knowing historic truth, but because of my hunger for mystic truth. Sometimes my discoveries disconcerted me, such as that caricature in the Kircherian Museum, in which an ass is represented as being crucified, and at the foot of the cross there is a kneeling man with this legend in Greek: *"Alexamenos adoring his God!"*

BISHOP

Inexpiable sacrilege!

GUEST

Your Grace knows that Father Kircher, the founder of the museum which bears his name in Rome, was a Jesuit missionary who made a collection of objects of extreme interest.

BISHOP

I know it, and I know the museum: but I do not recall having seen that horrible caricature of the ass, of which you speak.

GUEST

A German archæologist, the learned Helbig, has mentioned it in his work, *The Museums of Rome,* and he ascribes it to some pagan artist who was making fun of a Christian friend, probably during the first century.

BISHOP

You see the danger which lies in the oldest pic-

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torial documents, about which you were asking me a moment ago.

GUEST

I was not asking about those of this character, but about those that have authority, since I am presenting the problem of my doubts without sectarian bitterness, and an orthodox Catholic cannot well deny me his help.

BISHOP

Then, what documents might one suggest, if you are to destroy them all with your implacable spirit of negation?

GUEST

I deny nothing, definitely.

BISHOP

Neither do you affirm anything.

GUEST

I limit myself to recalling images of twenty centuries, to see if it is possible, amid their changing forms, to find the truth of the invisible spirit which lies hidden in them.

BISHOP

You have chosen the most roundabout way to do so. Truth is in the Church. There is no direct road, except by faith.

GUEST

I make my appeal to the images of the Catholic Church. Faith requires nothing more than personal consent to that which is held to be truth. But

this is not so in the case of the multiple figures, carving, or paintings which men have made, as other relics of the past, and which history has preserved. All that I pretend to do is to decipher the significance of these figures, if they have any significance.

BISHOP

I am not sure that I thoroughly understand you.

GUEST

Yet, I hope that we shall come to understand each other. Faith and doubt are twin sisters. We doubt those things which we formerly believed.

BISHOP

When faith is combated by reason, doubt is born.

GUEST

From doubt fertilized by reason, a new faith may be born.

BISHOP

That is chimerical.

GUEST

Doubt, when it denies, is not less subjective than faith when it affirms. Religious creation comes from the spirit, and criticism cannot always destroy it by means of scientific knowledge, for faith does not belong to external reality.

BISHOP

You try to destroy it.

GUEST

No, Your Grace, I protest. On the other hand,

there is a grace of understanding which God can concede to him who searches for it in the images of art. For this reason, I insist that we try to understand each other.

BISHOP

How can we bring this about?

GUEST

By defining with all clearness our starting point.

BISHOP

Which?

GUEST

Whether the liturgical image of Jesus Christ is an ideal evocation, an arbitrary interpretation, a metaphorical symbol, or if it is, on the contrary, an authentic document, a historical portrait, faithful to a living model, and in accord with an ecclesiastical canon.

BISHOP

The model is Jesus himself, and the canon is the tradition of the Church.

GUEST

You now return to that which I had already proved: that there is no prototypical document and that the tradition of the Church in this respect has been of the most heterodox diversity. The Church places on its altars indiscriminately "Christs" of the most opposite physiognomies, and, when we return to the earliest epoch, the vagueness is even more confusing. To make our confusion com-

plete, we find only the faded image on the cloth of Veronica, and the doubtful portrait of the Emerald, among various apocryphal relics, or the symbolical polymorphism of the Catacombs, whose dark crypts were pierced by the declining light of pagan mythology.

BISHOP

I confess that you really confuse me. What do you mean when you speak in this way of pagan mythology? Do you believe that its false gods had any influence in the iconography of the true God?

GUEST

In the firmament of Christianity there are vague suggestions of the ancient Olympians. The so-called Saint Peter in bronze, which is worshiped in Rome, was once a statue of Jupiter, and its foot is now kissed by Catholics. However, I do not wish just now, to refer to anything except the images of Jesus.

BISHOP

Very well, then, what pagan influence can you find in the images of Jesus?

GUEST

During the early centuries of our era, in the Catacombs, Christ was represented as a kind of Orpheus, with his lute, symbolizing in this way the power of his word over the passions and instincts, just as wild beasts were tamed by music in the mystery of Orpheus. Also he was represented as a Hermes Criophorus—the lamb-bearing Hermes of Greek

mythology—in which the figure of the Good Shepherd is exactly represented by the beardless youth with a sheep upon his shoulder. This is repeated many times. A small statue of the Good Shepherd, dating back to the third century, which is kept in the Lateran Museum, is a conclusive proof of the old myth carried over into the new.

BISHOP

Possibly those figures were nothing more than emblems for the initiated, in a time of persecution, which made secrecy necessary. They might also be simple representations of the image evoked by the parable of the lost sheep, as related by Saint Luke: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing." To see in the plastic images which have been created by the reading of this passage of the Gospel, an identity with the Hermes Criophorus is a matter for which you are alone responsible. In the same way, the fish, so frequent in early times, would not be merely a hieroglyphic, but an allusion to the water of baptism, by which the true Christian lives, to the miracle of the fishes, to provide food for the disciples, or simply to the parable of the Fisherman.

GUEST

I believe that like them, the present Christs are equally symbols of a higher initiation.

BISHOP

You are advancing rapidly.

GUEST

I would prefer not to do so, but you hurry me. For myself, I merely wished to tell you that from the figures of Orpheus and Hermes, of the early age, there was a transition to figures of the Good Shepherd, and from this to figures of the adolescent Christ, which find their inspiration in the stories of the gospel, and then to figures of a beardless Christ, which is a conception quite different from that of the bearded Christ.

BISHOP

I beg you to clarify your ideas on this point, since I feel that we find ourselves at dangerous cross-roads. The stories which illustrate the life of Christ explain fully these variations. Undoubtedly, the figures of the adolescent Christ represent the Messiah at the beginning of his ministry, when, still a child, he astonished his parents and the Pharisees.

GUEST

A painting by Grosso, entitled "Christ in the House of the Carpenter," which is modern, and whose large-sized original the author showed me in Turin, making me a photographic copy, which I gave to my mother, is a work which represents the carpenter shop of Joseph. In the foreground Jesus appears, talking with his parents, who are astonished at the divine power already shown by

this portentous child. This is a typical case of anecdotal composition.

BISHOP

Then you are in accord with my views?

GUEST

In examples such as these, no doubt I am; but now I wish to refer to other adolescent Christs which recall those of the Apollo of paganism.

BISHOP

Bridle your imagination.

GUEST

If I had here a few of those adolescent Christs, you would see that they are not vagaries of the imagination; for example, that of Bernardino Luini in the Ambrosian Museum of Milan, and that of Beltraffio in the Academy of Pergamus. How can one deny that these images of Christ, so startlingly Apolline, are utterly distinct from those others, suffering and bearded, representations whose gory strength allies them closely to Dionysius?

BISHOP

It makes one giddy to follow you, and I do not know whither you are tending.

GUEST

Do not be afraid, for there come to my lips two names of which you can have no fear.

BISHOP

Which?

GUEST

Raphael and Michelangelo.

BISHOP

I am listening with deep curiosity to see what you are about to say.

GUEST

"The Redeemer," in the communal Academy of Brescia, which was painted by Raphael during the heyday of the Renaissance, under a pontificate that, like Mæcenas, favored the arts, is a youthful Christ, beardless, with naked body, lustrous brow, the right hand lifted high, and no one seeing it could rid himself of the idea that it resembles the figures of Apollo.

BISHOP

And that of Michelangelo?

GUEST

More significant for my reasoning is the Christ of Michelangelo, which is called "Jesus Cursing the Reprobates," and which may be seen in the Sistine Chapel. Now, it is not a question of an adolescent Christ, nor of the story of the gospel, but of a Christ lifted up in full exercise of the Final Judgment. And yet, the artist has painted him beardless, full of youthful strength in body and face, shrouded in celestial light, as though he were himself a God of light. This "Christ" of Michelangelo, the spiritual archetype of the Messiah, is a perfect Apollo, and is found, as you see, in the Vatican

itself, whence the Pope governs the Christian Church.

BISHOP

You back up your arguments with references to exceptional productions, which may have the prestige of genius, but which come from an epoch which the Church itself has later considered degenerate in its ideas and customs.

GUEST

In the Sistine Chapel, under the very vault in which this Christ-Apollo is kept, the Holy Father to-day says his mass.

BISHOP

If the Holy Father should give orders to demolish that chapel or cover that figure, æsthetes of our time, like you, would declare him a barbarian.

GUEST

I prefer to think that all this was created by the genius of art, and that it lives on under the authority of religion because it has a more profound significance which we ought to look for.

BISHOP

Searching for it as you search, you will merely multiply the heresies of free examination.

GUEST

I do not think so, nor is that my intention. In Saint Luke we read, *"There is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed."* And I affirm that by thus

searching we shall come to conceive of a Christ more universal and more living as a Saviour of men. He has said, *"Search and ye shall find."*

BISHOP

I do not see how, in this case.

GUEST

By the same means that we are testing in our conversation; by the examination of documents which are neither exceptional nor capricious, but which are subject to complex spiritual, but not impenetrable, affiliations. Many things which the articulate word of man could not express in the Scriptures, even under the poetic form of parables, are revealed more fully in the liturgical symbols. Such is, for example, that which happens in the ceremony of the mass.

BISHOP

The mass is the gospel dramatized; but the Holy Sacrifice is contained essentially in the Eucharist, which is not a symbol, but the real communion of the faithful with the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the accidents of bread and wine, transubstantiated through the mystery of the Holy Spirit.

GUEST

Do not fear that I shall speak disrespectfully of that Mystery in your presence. I only ask permission to say that, contemplating the mass with a spiritual eye, some profound mystical meanings have been revealed to me; one of these is the rounded form of the Host, round like a Sun and like a Sun

luminous in the ritual aureola that surrounds it. Christianity in the snow-white disk of the Sacred Form, surpasses the natural heliolatry of the Chaldeans or the Incas, to consummate the evolution of an anthropomorphic sun, an evolution which was begun by the Greek Apollo, and goes back with the Christian mystery, through the bread of the earth, to the idea of a Spiritual Sun. The original solar conception thus rises from the cosmogonic to the anthropogonic, and from thence to the theogonic, summing up the entire cycle of light, matter and life, in the celestial perfection of man. Let us not forget that Christ said, *"I am the Light of the world,"* just as Apollo might have said it, and this may explain the figure painted by Michelangelo.

BISHOP

I prefer not to follow you in the paths of such dangerous extravagancies.

GUEST

And if, starting from the Hermes Criophorus of the Catacombs, we have reached the Apollo of Michelangelo, in the Sistine Chapel, passing through a long series of youthful Christs, we can still discover another parallel series of Christs, generally beardless; ambiguous Christs, of no definite age or sexless.

BISHOP

Ageless Christs?

GUEST

Yes, some hieratic Byzantine Christs.

BISHOP

Sexless Christs?

GUEST

Yes, some ambiguous Italian Christs.

BISHOP

I declare that it fills me with horror to see to what a depth of real perdition the learning of an unbelieving person may lead him.

GUEST

If you listen to me with patience and charity, you will see that I am not an unbeliever, and that I seek only the salvation of my soul in the spirit of your Saviour.

BISHOP

Ambiguous Christs!

GUEST

A mosaic of the sixth century, in the mausoleum of Galla Placidia, in Ravenna, represents the Good Shepherd surrounded by his sheep, with the cross as a crook, and in that mosaic one sees the Hermes of the Catacombs now transfigured in the image of a beardless though adult man, whose characteristics lack all biographical significance. A similar *Christ,* seated on his throne and surrounded by the celestial court of the apostles, decorates another mosaic of the sixth century, in the apse of the basilica of Parenzo, and from the same period comes a third mosaic which treats of the calling of Peter and Andrew, in which a beardless Jesus, at the lake-

side, blesses the new disciples. All these figures of Christ, of Byzantine technique, differ from the classical type of Jesus, whether it is that of his infancy or that of maturity, and do not reveal in their hieratic style a single racial characteristic. They simply present a being of almost abstract human form.

BISHOP

Tell me now of the other.

GUEST

Which?

BISHOP

I dare not name it.

GUEST

I have not said that!

BISHOP

But you have thought it, so great is your irreverent procacity.

GUEST

Your Grace, I must prove my sincerity. I have not thought of such a thing, except as a purely theological theme. The gods who were the creators of the ancient cosmogonies had no sex, or had both; as hermaphrodites they are invoked by the Asiatic hymn and by the indigenous Americans in their prayers. The first man of Genesis was sexless, or, rather, had the two, before Eve was created, according to some exegetes. The doctors of the Catholic Church have disputed at length about the sexual mystery of the angels; and the question as to

whether the angels are male or female, or of a third sexless condition, was a theme given in the examinations of the theological universities, among them our own university of Cordoba, in the eighteenth century. Why do you, then, in view of these precedents, become indignant because the miraculous figure of Jesus, God the Son, equal to his Father, the Creator, and God-Man by the incarnation of the Spirit, according to the annunciation of the angels, may have suggested to the great artists of the Renaissance the ambiguity inherent in the very material itself in which the Son of God was incarnated?

BISHOP

Because the Gospels state that Jesus was circumcised, and because the Church celebrates the circumcision of Jesus as a great feast day.

GUEST

If Christ is the Lord of the Universe, the Master of the World, the Angel of the Earth; if his virgin mother conceived him without having known a man, as the Scriptures tell us; if he went through life, celibate and pure, with no intimacy with women; if he was the archetype of spiritual perfection, why be astonished because, in spite of the fact of his circumcision, some of the artists of the Renaissance painted him as a languid, youthful figure, of strange and ambiguous beauty?

BISHOP

But were there artists who thus painted him?

GUEST

There were, Your Grace, and that does not surprise me, since the epoch was propitious for such conceptions. In the gallery of Brescia there is a "Jesus Adolescente," by Timothy Viti, which might as well be called "A Portrait of a Woman," since the rich tunic, the loose hair, the beardless face, the modest gesture, do not indicate that the painting represents a man. Fray Bartholomew has left us, in the gallery of Florence, a "Jesus of Nazareth," so effeminate, in spite of the beard, that even the crown of thorns seems to be a worldly diadem, set on a well-combed brow with curls reaching to the shoulders, while in the beautiful mouth and the languid eyes there is no expression of pain. It would seem that Boticelli, or one of his pupils, wished to represent him as suffering, in the "Redentor Bendiciendo" of the Academy of Bergamo; but the figure is that of a Christ characterized by the decorative, wavy hair of the *Zephyrs,* as in a painting of "Spring," by the same artist. You probably know these figures, since they are found in treatises on art and on postcards which Argentines are in the habit of bringing from Europe as mementos of the museums and churches they have visited.

BISHOP

I myself have some of them, which I have kept since my never-to-be-forgotten days in Italy, and, although I do not remember those you mention, I infer from your words that you are mistaken in your interpretation.

GUEST

There is in circulation an album of Christian iconography, entitled *L'Image de Jésus,* which reproduces in good photogravures the pictures I have just mentioned. If I should place them before your eyes, you would not say that.

BISHOP

I would say it, just the same.

GUEST

Due to stubbornness, perhaps.

BISHOP

Or moral repugnance.

GUEST

Allow me to observe, with due respect, that you are looking at this serious question with the prejudices of the confessional. I take my stand on a plane of high spiritual purity, far from the miseries inherent in sex and its monstrous imperfections. Saint Mark relates in his Gospel that, in order to tempt the Master with a difficult question, some incredulous persons who were listening to him presented the case of the widow who, according to Deuteronomy, ought to marry the brother of the dead husband, and then they asked of which of the seven brothers would the widow be the wife in the day of the resurrection. To this Jesus replied: "Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are

given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in heaven." This declares that sex disappears in the angelic condition.

BISHOP

In the angelic condition; but Christ, on incarnating himself in Jesus, took on himself the human condition, with all the attributes of earthly life.

GUEST

Jesus begins his earthly life through a miraculous event: the immaculate conception of his mother.

BISHOP

That is true; and he goes out of it through the resurrection, an equally miraculous event.

GUEST

Two mysteries of the flesh—sex abolished and death abolished—mark the beginning and the end of his biography.

BISHOP

Both prove the divine nature of our Lord. Since he was the Son of God announced by the prophets, he had to be born of a virgin, without a carnal father, since his Father is Jehovah, who fertilized the mother by action of the Holy Spirit, as the Scriptures tell us. For that reason he could rise from the dead on the third day, as Jesus himself had announced in Jerusalem, to give the final proof of his divinity, before ascending to the kingdom of heaven from whence he came.

GUEST

All this reveals that although Christ was incarnated in Jesus, Jesus was not a man like us. His body disappeared from the holy sepulcher. Some supposed, and suppose, that it was stolen or taken away. However, the Lord, reincarnated, appeared to Magdalene and to the disciples, after his death. We do not know if his body of dust returned to dust, or if he carried his body to heaven the day of his ascension, when he went to sit down at the right hand of the Father.

BISHOP

Christ became human in Jesus, but he was not a man like us, from the moral viewpoint, as all the acts of his earthly life prove.

GUEST

All of them?

BISHOP

All of them, including the preservation of his chastity among women of licentious life.

GUEST

There were some, among the women of the Gospels, who worshiped Him in his lifetime.

BISHOP

Yes, women who by his power had been freed from evil spirits, or healed of their diseases, and whose sins had been forgiven. Such women were moved by gratitude.

GUEST

Saint Luke, in the eighth chapter of his Gospel, mentions Joanna, the wife of Chuza, a steward of Herod, who believed in the Master, and Susanna and others who ministered unto him of their substance.

BISHOP

Such were moved by piety.

GUEST

And Mary Magdalene?

BISHOP

I was expecting you to name her.

GUEST

According to the *Jesus Christ* of Father Didon, Mary Magdalene is the adulteress, she who anointed Jesus with her perfumes, and she who went to look for his body in the tomb, the three being identified as the same woman, by a definite decree of the Church, although formerly they were considered three distinct persons.

BISHOP

I know that among blasphemers there are those who have even dared to declare that Mary Magdalene was carnally enamored of Jesus, and some such wretched persons will assert that Jesus kept her as his mistress.

GUEST

I know of no book that says this.

BISHOP

The suggestion has reached me in the confessional, as the echo of a conversation between men who presumed to be learned.

GUEST

I have also heard of that foolishness, which is entirely without foundation. Magdalene was enamored of Jesus, but spiritually enamored, because he had purified her, making her conceive of a love very different from that which had dominated her old life. When she anointed the feet of Jesus with her perfumes, and the Master, in reply to the murmuring of Judas, said that this woman would be pardoned because she had loved much, the Master told one of his most beautiful parables about that spiritual love which sanctifies life. The fact that Judas complained on that occasion suggests to me, on the other hand, that Judas himself was in love with Magdalene, and that she may have rejected him because she already was enamored of the true God, which is in man. The fact that his love was scorned and that he did not understand the meaning of faith, combined with his venality in regard to the thirty pieces of silver, would give us the key to his treason.

BISHOP

You may attribute to the Iscariot all the wickedness you wish, since, in a word, all would be too small in comparison with the sacrilegious, treacherous, and venal betrayal which he perpetrated in the garden.

GUEST

Have you no compassion on him?

BISHOP

None!

GUEST

Still, he may merit it.

BISHOP

Compassion? Perhaps. Justification or pardon? Never!

GUEST

There is something of fatality in the gospel, as in the obligatory ending of ancient tragedies. In such a case the agents of evil are the victims of destiny, like those who suffer the aggression of evil. The Gospel of Matthew tells us that when Judas entered the garden with the crowd, Jesus said to him, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" and that as Judas gave him a kiss, which was the sign agreed upon by the betrayer and the enemies of Jesus, one of the disciples drew his sword to defend him and wounded a servant of the high priest. But Jesus stopped him, saying: "Put up thy sword again into its place. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" And then, addressing the multitude, he added, "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all

this was done, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples fled, leaving him alone in the midst of his enemies. Judas, in bringing about the arrest of Jesus, makes sure his death, and thus the drama becomes more pathetic in its human contrasts, for the fatal fulfillment of the prophecies.

BISHOP

That which you say would not be a blasphemy if it were not that, in addition to postulating pagan fatality, which is contrary to Christian free will, it presupposes erotic jealousy of his Master on the part of Judas, as the origin of his betrayal. Such a thought places you, besides, in contradiction with yourself, since you assign to Jesus a virile part which a little while ago you denied him.

GUEST

I have not denied him such a part, nor do I attribute it to him. I have merely recalled some of the effeminate representations of Christ in Italian art. By some contrast of ideas we have gone from one extreme to the other—nothing more. I maintain my position half way between the two—that Christ is an enigma in the flesh.

BISHOP

There is no such enigma.

GUEST

His manly beauty, his character by no means voluble, his heroic conception of morality, his anger

against adversaries, his sublime patience in his own misfortune are a sufficient revelation of the virile strength of his formidable personality. And, above all else, look at the death of Jesus: it is feminine to die for a man, for a dream of personal happiness, for a concrete good which is being taken from us. It is masculine to die for an abstract idea; one's native country, liberty, truth. Thus died Socrates and Bruno. Jesus died for the salvation of the entire human race, like a hero of a moral ideal.

BISHOP

He died as the God of Love.

GUEST

You are right.

BISHOP

Then . . .

GUEST

Without forgetting that morality is, doubtless, a masculine conception, I say that the enigma emerges when other characteristics of Jesus are taken into account, such as his mother-love for children, his indulgence toward feminine sins, the sweet tone of his voice and his habitual manners. This is that which some of the artists of the Renaissance saw in him, while other more modern artists prefer to present him under the aspect of a ragged revolutionary and abrupt in his manners. For that reason his complex and changeable personality is so human. It contains, in itself, the characteristics of all races, inasmuch as it is above them all; of all ages, since

he has the sentiment of a child and speaks as a gray-beard; and it contains, perhaps, all the mystery of carnal man, the Adam-Eve whose fall, which he redeemed, was a fall due to love.

BISHOP

Your praise really injures him.

GUEST

No, since art may be a revelation, and thus those ambiguous representations of the Christ may open for us a new perspective of the Spirit of God, considered in the fullness of his divine attributes.

BISHOP

What do you mean by all that?

GUEST

The greatest afflictions of mankind, the most human, are those which arise from sex. Love is the way to salvation, and it is also the way to perdition, for man and woman. During many years of the life of Jesus, we know nothing of him, and it is not adventuresome to imagine that in that period of his early manhood he led a life in keeping with his age and sex. Otherwise, he would not have known earthly grief, the great human mystery. Love could enter into his divine life, as it entered into the sacrifice of his death, without the conquest of the spirit by the flesh.

BISHOP

You have very skillfully sheered off from a difficult problem.

GUEST

Not at all, since I have said before that the period was propitious for conceptions of that kind. The ancients looked on these things with less aversion than we do, and the Renaissance inherited the ideas of the past in regard to sex. Pagan art has left to posterity a remarkable statue called the *Reclining Hermaphrodite* which is now in the Museum of the Louvre, a human figure with the sex of a man and the breasts of a woman. A similar figure could not be modeled to-day without causing a public scandal. Classic literature, for its part, is full of allusions to such things, even in the *Cæsars* of Suetonius and in the *Lives* of Plutarch, not to speak of erotic and bucolic poetry.

BISHOP

All that you say was the great sin of antiquity. The fall of Israel, of Greece, and of Rome constituted the punishment necessary for the triumph of Christianity. The Middle Ages was the purification of the flesh, as Chesterton has well said in his *Saint Francis of Assisi,* since Saint Francis of Assisi, a forerunner of the Renaissance, as was also Dante, was one who announced the triumph of the spirit of Christ over the flesh.

GUEST

The childish treble in the voices of the eunuch choirs which I have heard in Saint Peter's, in Rome, and the phallic carvings of the stalls in the stupendous Cathedral of Ciudad Rodrigo, are proofs that the flesh is not yet purified. In the Renaissance,

after the Middle Ages, an artist of the genius of Leonardo da Vinci, he himself an ambiguous person, struggled with that same problem and on his canvases painted beautiful youths who seemed to be women. Even in the period before, the power of the flesh was set forth by Ovid in his *Ars Amandi,* and platonic ideas as to love acquired much vogue, such as the divulgation given them in Italy by the book of Leon Hebreo, ascribing to love an ideal strength which overcame the limitations of sex, as is proved by the heroic chastity of the troubadours. And, do not forget that Christ was the hero of universal love, of spiritual love carried beyond all possible limits. He comprised in his conscience the mystery of the sexes, like the versatile dramatists: Shakespeare well understands the secret of Hamlet and Ophelia. Jesus looked into the deepest depths of the human soul, and lived the life of all human beings, since he carried their sorrows.

BISHOP

I am not forgetting all that, but I prefer to remember that he was also a model of purity, and that perhaps the artists, wishing to push to an extreme the interpretation of this sublime attribute, created those figures of ambiguous Christs, as you call them.

GUEST

That is another phase of Christian idealism, and it has been insuperably interpreted by Giotto and Angelico, and persists, beautifully idealized, in some of the paintings of Christ by Giorgione, an artist

who surrounds the flesh of his figures with an ethereal vibration. The *Christs* painted by the devout Angelico have the supreme mystic serenity which characterizes a spiritual being. A figure of "Christ on the Cross," which is one of his works, and is preserved in the Martian Museum, an old convent of Florence, looks like a man who has fallen asleep on his couch. . . .

BISHOP

What I cannot understand is where these contradictory disquisitions are leading you.

GUEST

I have already told you; to discover if there is in existence any image of the bodily figure of Christ, accepted by history or consecrated by religion, which may be held as authentic, immutable, and canonical.

BISHOP

According to your reasoning, such a figure does not exist.

GUEST

Such a figure does not exist, but another: a figure that is mutable, fluid, free, like the life of the spirit which Jesus temporarily incarnated in his body of flesh.

BISHOP

There are variations which grow out of the biography of Jesus, and others of the material in which the image was formed. The problem is less complicated than you think it to be. I could prove this to you, right now.

GUEST

Now it is I who must listen.

BISHOP

In this matter art has collaborated with worship. It seems explicable that the changing anatomy of the model and the diverse technique of the interpreters may have produced different figures. Some represent Jesus newly born, the Child-God; others represent him dead, the Man crucified. Between these two extremes the body of our Lord must have suffered many changes. In the various passages of the Gospels there are situations so complex that, when the fervor of believers or the inspiration of artists makes use of them, iconography could not be expected to limit itself to a single figure. . . . It was not the same to be at the wedding in Cana of Galilee as in the Garden of Olives. I think I make myself clear and that these reflections will be acceptable to you.

GUEST

I accept this fully, inasmuch as such variation is seen even in different photographs of models of the present time. But what about the variations of the model itself, as conceived of by faith or by art as a distinct being or one which changes in itself?

BISHOP

I do not understand you.

GUEST

You will soon understand me. Please continue, Your Grace.

BISHOP

I was saying that, in all this, art has collaborated with worship. A piece of ivory, a stick of wood, a bit of plaster of Paris, a bronze, a piece of marble, each gives a different expression to the same theme. They are like translations of the same literary image into different languages.

GUEST

That is true, even in the case of present-day models and historical portraits fully authenticated.

BISHOP

Add to that the fact of the long duration of Christianity. During twenty centuries there has been a tremendous variation in human sensitiveness and in technical culture. A painting of the Christ, made by one of the early painters, cannot be expected to resemble one painted during the Renaissance, nor could one of the Byzantine period resemble one painted in the Paris of our own day.

GUEST

I agree with you. In a church in Salamanca I saw a crucifix which is said to have belonged to the Cid, and in the Archæological Museum of Madrid, another which is said to have belonged to Queen Sancha, very much like those of the period of the Visigoths, whose eyes of inlaid stones remind one of pagan idols, and whose anatomical disproportion makes them akin to the amulets of Africa. The work of Stratz, on *The Human Figure in Art,* tends

to clear up many of these problems, showing the variation of the anatomical canon and the lack of harmony in technique.

BISHOP

It is also necessary to keep in mind another psychological element which helps explain these variations: the opinion of the artist in regard to the person whom he is representing, and the condition of soul which he attributes to that person. The physiognomy of a person changes greatly, in addition, under the influence of the emotions. The face of Christ, like his body, seems changed by the physical and moral trials he underwent. The fury of Him who drove the merchants from the Temple, the spiritual exaltation of Him who beheld the fire of Elijah, the resignation of Him who bore the taunts of the Pretorium, gave to the august face of the Redeemer a different visage at times, and surrounded it with a different atmosphere. Again, artists have sometimes wished to see in him a revolutionist, sometimes a teacher; sometimes a God, and sometimes a man. I hope this way of looking at the question by artists and philosophers may satisfy your objections.

GUEST

You have spoken wisely, and I would not dare attempt any rectification of what you have said; but you have answered me with a history of art, and I have questioned you in regard to the history of religion, which is not the same thing.

BISHOP

We cannot separate the one from the other, inasmuch as we are treating of liturgical iconography.

GUEST

You have separated them.

BISHOP

Not at all.

GUEST

I do not refer to accidental variations which may serve for the study of figures as artistic creations, but to essential variations which may signify the substitution of one model for another, thus modifying the very foundations of religious creation.

BISHOP

Let us see how.

GUEST

We have already seen how the works of different artists, especially if they belong to different schools or periods, may differ one from the other, even when they treat the same theme. But I go still further: the same theme changes when treated by the same artist in different forms, as happens with the "Christs" we owe to Andrea del Sarto or to Perugino, which are different paintings from the same brush. On the other hand, the sculptured head of Christ, by Michelangelo, which is kept in Santa Maria above Minerva, has in every sense the aspect of a Greek statue, is different from others by the same artist, and very similar, in type and

posture, to the "Christ" of the painter of Verona, which appears in the famous painting of the banquet of Levy. The history of art abounds in such proofs. The realism of Mantegna, of Dürer of Ribera, has given us in their blood-stained "Christs" disgusting visions suited to the amphitheater, which are in vivid contrast with the ecstatic and mild-mannered "Christs" of Guido de Reni or of Marata. The "Christs" of Corot and Flandrin, rendered melodramatic by the influence of the race and school to which their authors belong, are in no sense similar to the austere "Christs" of Velasquez or of Van Dyck. All this is evident and belongs to the history of art; so much so, that the central question of my reasoning is quite distinct, and may be summed up in these words: Why is it that the Christian Church has permitted the worship of its Founder through images which represent a man without bodily individuality?

BISHOP

Do you mean to say that Jesus Christ has not existed?

GUEST

No, Your Grace; He existed, and his divine personality, he himself being God, was incarnated in the person of Jesus; but the corporeal reality of Jesus is not defined in the contradictory imagery which the Church allows to crowd its altars.

BISHOP

It would be necessary to prove this.

GUEST

I have already proved it, but I will give you a definite example: in the churches of the south of Italy and in Andalusia, the images of Christ are generally dark; but in the churches in the north of Italy and in Germany they are generally fair.

BISHOP

Strange examples! Of course Jesus and other persons of the Gospel are clothed with the garments of the countries and the period in which the works were painted, and art represents the scenes of the Passion in conventional places. These are exoticisms and anachronisms which the history of culture can easily explain. Taine has treated this point in his book, *A Journey to Italy,* in some very interesting observations.

GUEST

Be careful, Your Grace: remember that if you apply to the iconography of worship the general principles of the positive history of art, you run the risk of becoming heretical, just as Strauss became heretical by applying to the Gospels the rational methods of historical criticism.

BISHOP

It is not the same thing, because the Gospels have a divine origin and sanction.

GUEST

That is the real crux of the difficulty; that the images of Christ have a merely human origin, since

the Church has permitted a free interpretation in this matter.

BISHOP

The images used in worship are of human workmanship, and we worship through them, not as idols, but as representations of a divine personality.

GUEST

In the book of Daniel, it is related that the prophet refused to worship the idol Bel, as the king commanded, replying to the king: "I do not worship idols made by hands, but the living God that created heaven and earth and hath power over all flesh." Like the prophet Daniel, I look beyond these idols made by hand to the uncreated reality of the living God. In the image of Jesus, the Man, I search for the spirit of Christ, the true God, the invisible Christ.

BISHOP

That is the difference between the gross faith of the idolater who looks on the image as a god, and the sublime faith of the believer who sees in the image only a representation of the Supreme Being whom he adores in his inmost heart.

GUEST

I see that we are beginning to understand each other.

BISHOP

The multitudinous images of Christ can be no obstacle to reaching Him who is ready to receive

all who approach him with pure hearts, without vanity and without sin.

GUEST

Christ has said, "No one cometh to the Father, but by me." It is for that reason that I long to find a light for my path; and I am sure that if the Church has not adopted a canonical prototype for the image of Christ, I can create one for myself without leaving the Church.

BISHOP

It never occurred to me to think of such audacity.

GUEST

The Church evidently followed some definite plan when it left to man the privilege of adapting the figure of the Redeemer to the type of every race, and even of every person.

BISHOP

I cannot deny that you present your arguments in a most original way.

GUEST

I have in my collection of images of Christ a crucifix of wood which I acquired in Spain, and which is probably the work of some convert on the Moorish frontier in the sixteenth century. The figure of the Christ on this crucifix is that of a mulatto.

BISHOP

I have never seen such a thing.

GUEST

I have another of silver, which comes from upper Peru, the work of some colonial silversmith, and the figure is that of an Indian whose beard is composed of but three hairs on the extremities of the lips.

BISHOP

Singular finds!

GUEST

We have an Indian Christ, and this comforts me, since in the three wise men who worshiped Jesus in Bethlehem, only the races of the continents which were known at that time are represented. There was lacking in that court the copper-colored king, the Inca of America. Fifteen centuries later the man from America reached Bethlehem!

BISHOP

In saying such things you first arouse my indignation, and then disarm it.

GUEST

I have heard it said that the Christian Negroes of North America believe that the devil is white, since the white people have done them so much evil, and they have come to imagine that Christ was a Negro.

BISHOP

Will we also have African Christs?

GUEST

Just as we have Mongolian Buddhas. God cre-

ated man in his image, but man creates God by the inverse method. So you see, Your Grace, that all this is less accidental than the anachronous garments in a painting by Tintoretto. I am pointing out varieties of race, where the representation of Christ is made more universal, acquiring the fruitful diversity of individual lives. The image thus surpasses the inert idol in the conversion of itself into a living God, because it is renewed in each one of its worshipers. When Genesis tells us that God created man in his own image, we must understand that it was in the image of his being, not of his face. The Adams and Eves of the liturgy, which illustrate the book of Stratz, already cited, are as different as the images of Christ, as regards their race.

BISHOP

Nevertheless, if the physical type of the Saviour were to be referred to any one race, it would be well to remember that Jesus was a Galilæan.

GUEST

I have read that the name of Galilee is derived from *Gelil haggoyim,* which signifies "circle of the Gentiles."

BISHOP

What do you mean by that?

GUEST

That the name suited the native place of Jesus, since there were in it Phœnicians, Syrians, Arabs, and many Greeks, although a considerable number

of these were converts to Judaism, and that, in addition, there were magistrates and Roman soldiers who governed the place. With these facts before us, the racial question loses importance, if it is attempted to infer from his native town a physical type for the Nazarene.

BISHOP

In any case, the ethnic question would lose importance, remembering that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit.

GUEST

I believe the same, and in that case no value can be attributed to the genealogy which Saint Matthew gives to the carpenter Joseph, inasmuch as he was not the carnal father of Jesus.

BISHOP

And the mother?

GUEST

In regard to Mary and her ancestors they may very well have been the product of that melting pot of races, Galilee of the Gentiles.

BISHOP

According to a certain genealogy, the Virgin was a descendant of David.

GUEST

There are two different genealogies of the Mother in the book of Didon, published with the *nihil obstat*. The rationalistic induction breaks down here also, or at least leads to the same lack of precision of

ethnic forms which the creation symbolizes. In the last resort, we might distinguish between Jesus, the Man according to the flesh, and Christ, God according to the spirit, since Jesus-Christ sums up that duality.

BISHOP

Perhaps it is as well not to forget that Saint Paul said, "There is now neither Jew nor Gentile."

GUEST

That is one of the most beautiful affirmations of the doctrine of Christ, and constitutes another element of his universality.

BISHOP

However, the traditions of the Hebrew spirit formed the personality of Jesus.

GUEST

There is no doubt that without the Messianism of Israel, we do not understand the Messiah. But this refers to the thought of Christ, not to the body of Jesus. Perhaps the Nazarene appeared in that town, because it was the best prepared for a religious movement like Christianity. Moreover, the Jews are a people of extraordinary ethnic diversity.

BISHOP

Some artists have represented Jesus as a rabbi of the ghetto, with pallid face, dark beard, fleshy lips, and that unmistakable air which characterizes the children of Israel.

GUEST

That is true, and I recall as the most characteristic in this sense, some "Christs" by Rembrandt, in the Sedelmayer collection. However, the models were not always swarthy Jews. Blond Jews have posed for Scheffer, Hofmann, Hunt, who are modern artists of northern Europe. The Latin artists of the Renaissance, especially Titian, Raphael, and Velasquez and Greco, preferred to use the conventional type of classical beauty in their work; but there are not lacking among the Italians of the period "Christs" in which one recognizes the man of the ghetto of their day.

BISHOP

Do you find that logical?

GUEST

I should ask that of you.

BISHOP

Why?

GUEST

Because if the Church has for centuries maintained an anti-Semitic attitude, in the name of Christ, it seems a contradiction to represent Christ as a Jew.

BISHOP

Nevertheless, he was a Jew.

GUEST

Who can be sure? On the other hand, from the

scientific viewpoint, it could be adduced that a geography of Reclus publishes portraits of Jews belonging to all races. Judaism is not to-day an ethnic question, but one of ethics. The Hebrew nationality of Jesus does not impose a definite physical type, since there are Israelites of the most diverse appearance, not excluding the yellow and black races. Thus, the supposed race of Jesus turns out even more varied than the iconography of Christ.

BISHOP

In good theological science it might be decreed that since Jesus Christ was the Incarnate Word, his figure cannot correspond to a racial type, but to an ideal archetype of humanity, superior to ethnic accidents of races, place, or time, which are merely stages in the spiritual evolution of man.

GUEST

I subscribe to that opinion and it is perhaps because of it that the Church permitted artists in their work to search for that physical archetype of beauty, just as believers in their lives ought to try to attain to the spiritual archetype of good of which Jesus Christ was the divine paradigm.

BISHOP

And it may be for the same reason that we lack an unquestioned written record, and even a literary portrait in the Gospels.

GUEST

True. The Gospels, so careful in reproducing

anecdotes and conversations, have kept silent in regard to the personal appearance of the Messiah.

BISHOP

Providence moves in ways that are mysterious in the sight of man. . . .

GUEST

Nevertheless, there is a passage in the nineteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke, which seems to refer to the physical appearance of Christ. It is there related that a rich publican joined the crowd that one day surrounded the great Teacher, in Jericho, because he had heard much of him and wished to know him. At this point, Luke reads literally: "And he sought to see Jesus who he was, and could not for the press, because he was little of stature." The passage is ambiguous, and I do not know whether it refers to the publican or to the Master.

BISHOP

It refers to the publican.

GUEST

This being true, we know nothing of the physical figure of Jesus, not even if he were tall or short.

BISHOP

That is true, in effect, if we rely on the Gospels, although there are in them other passages which refer to the resurrection of our Lord and his appearance to the disciples.

GUEST

I recall them. But neither do they aid in clearing up our difficulties in regard to what I will call a portrait of Jesus. Nevertheless, the resurrection of Christ suggests an important warning in regard to his bodily figure: if Christ rose from the dead in his original form, how can we explain the fact that those who saw him did not at once recognize him? He showed himelf to those who knew him best, and they did not recognize him.

BISHOP

Your observations are disconcerting. Taken by surprise, since I do not recall having read anything on the point, I cannot imagine anything else than that, although he rose from the dead in his own flesh—since his corpse had disappeared from the holy sepulcher—his body had been somewhat disfigured by death.

GUEST

The miracle of rising from the dead is in itself so powerful that, if divine power succeeded in restoring life, with less effort it could have restored form. Life is a great mystery, and belongs to God. Less elusive is form, since it is given to man in the productions of art.

BISHOP

And what do you deduce from all this?

GUEST

That Christ did not rise with his original ap-

pearance, since this was not the important thing for him. His facial appearance was the ephemeral element in his incarnation. The eternal element was the Spirit, and he desired that men should recognize him by it.

BISHOP

You make me thoughtful. . . .

GUEST

You see now that I have studied the Scriptures on my own account, and that I have meditated on them in a spirit of the most pure devotion.

BISHOP

I believe you. . . .

GUEST

I know of no commentary on this point. If I am guilty of heresy, the fault cannot be imputed to the reading of pernicious literature. The thought came to me for the first time when reading the Gospel of Matthew, whose description of the resurrection you remember.

BISHOP

Of course, I remember it very well.

GUEST

The writer of the Gospel of John relates that the Master appeared to Mary Magdalene, when the holy women found the tomb empty and were returning desolate toward the city. It is significant that it was a woman, and a woman who was a sinner, who was the first person to see the risen Lord.

But this is not what I want to point out, but, rather, the conversation between the two. As Mary was weeping while returning, having failed to find the sacred body in the tomb, she saw near her a man who asked her: "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" It was the hour of dawn, and Mary, believing him to be the gardener, since they were still within the property of Joseph of Arimathæa, replied: "Because they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have placed him. Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." The man looked at her for a moment, and, in his gentle voice, simply called her by name, saying, "Mary!" When she heard that voice, Mary Magdalene recognized it as the voice of her Lord, and exclaiming, "Master," fell on her knees at the feet of Him who had risen from the dead. Crouching in the grass, she wished to embrace his wounded feet, but the Master said to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God." And, saying this, the vision was slowly lost among the trees.

BISHOP

A moving scene!

GUEST

And a sublime moment of faith, since Jesus had died, and of the risen Christ Christianity was to be born as a new religion. But, let us observe that

Magdalene, *on seeing* Christ, did not recognize him. She recognized him on hearing *his voice.* Christ was not revealed to her, then, in a visible form, but by the mystic individuality of his voice, which is as an echo of the soul.

BISHOP

You have the unction of a true believer, but you reason with the dangerous liberty of a sophist.

GUEST

Do not believe that, Your Grace. I am merely trying to find moral perfection in the path of knowledge, which, according to the sacred doctrine of India, is likewise a path of righteousness. Jesus said, "I am the truth," that is to say, knowledge. All the theology of Saint Thomas is founded on the necessity of tempering faith with reason.

BISHOP

There is no sure path for faith outside the doctrine of our Church.

GUEST

I cite its books, and from the Gospel I take this other observation: the risen Christ appeared to Simon, first; to Cleophas, afterward; and finally, to the disciples who were met together. They all saw him, and did not believe that it was our Lord. Why did they fail to recognize him? Is it that he presented himself under different aspects, as in the diverse representations of ecclesiastical iconography? Is it that we have here only vague hallucinations, brought on by fasting and suffering?

BISHOP

Cleophas was not one of the twelve, although he also saw him. Remember that Jesus spoke to him and to another Jew on the way to Emmaus, and supped with them in an inn by the wayside. Neither Cleophas nor his friend had believed in Christ when he lived among men.

GUEST

What you say is true, Your Grace. Then Christ must have shown himself, not in his own carnal substance, but in dim astral forms like the ectoplasm of spiritists.

BISHOP

No. Neither is that true. Spiritism is a demoniacal evocation, or a fraud that is too patently human. Moreover, I remind you that, according to this same Gospel, when the Lord appeared to the eleven in the Last Supper, after greeting them with the sacramental *Pax vobis,* one of the disciples, in the midst of the general confusion, cried out: "Art thou in reality alive, or art thou a shadow that has come from the caves of death to tempt us?" And he replied, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Convinced, they invited him to eat a little of the fish which they had upon the table, and looked on him with amazement as he ate. As you see, the Gospels themselves, which you quote, reply

to the suspicion of spiritism which you had insinuated.

GUEST

It was only an insinuation, and I proposed, by elimination, to arrive where you have brought me; that is to say, the moment in which Christ reproached those who saw him without recognizing him, or did not believe in him. You will remember that he was obliged to show the apostles the wounds in his hands and feet; that is to say, the proofs of his suffering. "Behold my hands and my feet. It is I!" Only thus did they believe.

BISHOP

It was a case of human confusion in presence of a divine marvel.

GUEST

Very well. Thomas was absent that night, and when he afterward heard the marvelous story, he did not believe it, just as the others had not believed the story of Cleophas. But the risen Christ returned another night, for the express purpose of convincing Thomas, not by sight but by touch, just as he revealed himself to Mary through her sense of hearing. "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe," the materialist Thomas had declared. Jesus came and, in the presence of his companions, said to him, "Reach hither thy finger. Reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing." Thomas did so,

and frightened, cried out: "My Lord and my God!" and the Master replied, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed"—a new beatitude which the Master had not included in his Sermon on the Mount.

BISHOP

Blessed are they that have not seen me, and have believed!

GUEST

This gives authority to say that the visible form, its carnal reality, its æsthetic image, may be a way for faith, but that it is only a way. That which interested Jesus was spiritual goals, mystic destinies, the far-off horizons of inner contemplation: that men should believe in him as Spirit rather than an ephemeral reality, for, if he was made man, it was only to give testimony of the kingdom of God and offer in his death the purest sacrifice, as a symbol of love. For that reason his physical image is to-day variable. It is in, or may be in, every man, as an invisible God.

BISHOP

It moves me to hear you, and I do not know if the grace of the Lord has at last penetrated your understanding, since you say such profound things in regard to the mysteries of our faith.

GUEST

Do not absolve me just yet, for I still have many things to say, and some of them may seem heretical or, at least, rash.

BISHOP

Which, for example?

GUEST

That according to all which we have made clear in this conversation, Christ created Christianity, but also Christianity has created Christ, or it is still creating him in a continual change of form.

BISHOP

In truth, that is a rash paradox!

GUEST

I warned you.

BISHOP

You are an incomprehensible man.

GUEST

I asked you not to pronounce absolution; now I ask you not to condemn me just yet.

BISHOP

Go on!

GUEST

I have given twenty years to the study of Christian iconography; I have visited hundreds of Catholic churches in Europe and America; I have gone over some interesting specimens in a small private collection; I have read as much history, theology, and mysticism as I needed to read for the best understanding of these problems. And all the time that image of Christ, which persists and yet changes, which springs unauthenticated from the mists of its

beginnings, and which soon breaks away from creative symbols and pagan myths, multiplying slowly through art and through faith, with its many-formed and persistent dynamism of vital forces, has seemed to me more fruitful.

BISHOP

I declare that the more I hear you speak, the more enigmatical you seem to me. You reason with the cold-bloodedness of an atheist, and you speak with the unction of a mystic. If I have not misunderstood you, you have stated that the figure of Christ is a creation of his Church. . . .

GUEST

That is what I said, but I warn you that for the moment I am referring only to his bodily figure, which is the object of this conversation. Through a deeper knowledge of that figure I hope to rise before long to a better understanding of his spiritual figure. And it is evident that the image of Christ, unauthenticated in its beginnings, conceals itself at first in esoteric symbols of the Lamb and the Fish or in pagan allegories of Hermes Criophorus, bearer of the lamb, and Orpheus, the bearer of the lute. The bearded man who comes to be, in later centuries, the central figure and the most prominent of that profuse imagery, alternates with the Child who was worshiped by the wise men and the Apolline youth who persists even to the time of Michelangelo. That virile type, roughly outlined in the early centuries, is fully defined in the Renaissance, when art, in the fullness of its means of expression,

and humanism, in the fullness of its creative sentiments, jointly mold the Human Archetype, which is, in my belief, a new symbol. From the hazy portrait of Veronica or the apocryphal portrait of King Abgar, we pass to another image which is kept in the Roman Church of Saint Silvester, a painting without proof of date or precedence, which, because of having belonged to public worship, seems to me very significant, since the Nazarene type of hair and beard is better defined in it than in certain outlines that are found in the Catacombs. From that time onward, æsthetic creation and mystic creation work in two distinct spiritual directions, inspired by the tradition of Hebrew Messianism.

BISHOP

What are these two directions?

GUEST

The one comes from Isaiah, who in chapters 52 and 53 thus describes the Redeemer: "He hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him." Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr believed in this vision. From it, as is logical, there must have come an ugly Christ.

BISHOP

And the other?

GUEST

The other is derived from the forty-fifth psalm, where David says to the Messiah, "Thou art fairer

than the children of men." Saint Ambrose and Saint Chrysostom believed in this vision, as did other church Fathers of the East and of the West. From this psalm we derive the idea of a beautiful Christ.

BISHOP

Do the ugly Christ of the prophet and the beautiful Christ of the psalmist imply a contradiction, in your opinion?

GUEST

I do not know whether a contradiction is implied, but on such differences the beginnings of Christian iconography were founded, which, due to the lack of more authentic documents, began to model Christ under the action of many influences, among which, together with Greek philosophy and art, we must take biblical prophecy into account.

BISHOP

The vision of Isaiah evidently describes the unhappy man of the Prætorium, of the *Via Crucis,* of Calvary, who, without a doubt, was not a pleasant object to look at, as the prophet tells us; and the description of the psalmist refers to our Lord during his quiet and inspired hours, when he certainly seemed to his disciples the most attractive figure among men. Thus you can see how all the apparent contradictions of the Scriptures are solved in the mysterious complexity of our Lord.

GUEST

I do not pretend to present a scholastic question,

and I admire your skill in solving apparent contradictions. I merely wish to recall that, lacking pictorial documents and Christian testimonies, the Church made use of the Old Testament, especially the prophecies, to make Christ appear as in accord with them. From this we have the two interpretations to which I refer.

BISHOP

Of the two, the idea of a beautiful Christ was the stronger. He is thus presented, for example, by Titian and Raphael. Furthermore, this is the image that is more strictly in accord with the history of Jesus and with the Christian ideal.

GUEST

Nevertheless, ugly Christs were perpetuated by Mantegna, Dürer, and Valdesteal, and they are found even in modern canvases, such as that of Gustave von de Woestyne, in his "Jesus Christ Showing His Wounds."

BISHOP

Certain episodes of the Passion demand that form of realistic treatment.

GUEST

Besides, the beautiful Christs continued to live in a great variety of models, now light, now dark, now Semitic, now Aryan, now calm, now in agony, according to the free fancy of the artists, such as Giorgione, Greco, Murillo, Holbein, and many other artists of very different schools. For that reason I

say that Christianity has created the figure of Christ and that this creative process still continues.

BISHOP

Doubtless, the period of the Renaissance was the golden age of Christian iconography.

GUEST

It was the period of its greatest development, but in former centuries there was a suggestion of its coming, like the sun at dawn. Saint Francis had announced the new spirit. The "Christ" of the Beato Angelico is the forerunner of the painting of the thirteenth century, in its beauty, its emotion, and its type. But literary imagination had provided the ideal model before it was realized on canvas.

BISHOP

To what do you refer?

GUEST

To the famous letter of Publius Lentulus, which dates from the twelfth century and is preserved in the Vatican Library. It is, of course, an apocryphal document, but it is an admirable piece of work. Probably Your Grace knows it.

BISHOP

I know it, if you refer to the letter which Lentulus, the supposed predecessor of Pilate in the governorship of Judah, is said to have sent to the Roman senate, in the reign of Tiberius, describing the Messiah who had just appeared. It is most certainly a very definite portrait.

GUEST

I know it by memory.

BISHOP

I would like to hear it, if you will recite it.

GUEST

I have translated it into Spanish and it runs like this: "A man of singular virtue has appeared and lives among us. Those who follow him call him 'The Son of God.' This man heals the sick and raises the dead. He is of great stature and attracts attention. His face inspires love and fear, at the same time. His hair is long and fair, smooth down to his ears and from then it hangs in curly ringlets to his shoulders; it is parted in the middle and falls to the two sides, in accord with the custom of the Nazarenes. His cheeks are slightly pink, his nose short, his mouth well formed. His beard, thick and parted in the middle, is the color of ripe hazelnuts, like his hair. His look reveals understanding and candor. His blue eyes become suddenly veiled with shadows. This Man, who is on the whole affable in his talk, becomes terrible when he reproaches one; but even in such cases, it is seen that he has complete control of himself. He has never been seen to laugh, although he has frequently been seen to weep. The tone of his voice is quiet, reserved, modest. In every respect, his is the most beautiful figure that a man could have, the perfect flower of mankind. His name is Jesus, the Son of Mary."

BISHOP

It is an admirable work and worthy of an excellent memory.

GUEST

The anonymous writer who drew it has, without doubt, produced an unforgettable portrait.

BISHOP

You have in that letter the portrait of Christ for which you are searching.

GUEST

From it has sprung, perhaps, later iconography, which tended to the realization of that imaginary prototype, and the Beato Angelico was the first who succeeded in catching the vision.

BISHOP

Among the "Christs" of the Renaissance I prefer those of the Spanish school.

GUEST

I could not express a preference for any particular one of the many paintings of Christ.

BISHOP

In the Museum of the Prado, in Madrid, there is one by Juan de Juanes, in which he holds the sacred wafer in his hand, and the famous one by Velasquez, in which he is represented hanging on the cross; a third by Greco, with the title "Salvador Mundi," which I believe is in Toledo, is also admirable. I find all these very human.

GUEST

But Spain, the rather, holds first place in colored sculptures, in which Alonso Cano and Martinez Montañes were masters. In this line of work I recall the statuary of Seville, which impressed me very much during a Holy Week that I spent in that city. It was the ingenuous procession of my childish fancies, elevated to the category of a sumptuous art, both moving and barbaric. The "Lord of Great Power," the "Christ of Passion," the "Christ on Calvary," the "Descent," and especially the Gorgonesque representation of the "Expiration," and the "Cachorro" of Triana, are masterpieces of their kind; they all exalt the "Man of Sorrows" of the Scriptures. All that is pathetic, all that is rhetorical, in Spanish genius, is blended with the exquisite sensuality of the suffering forms. They combine the color of blood and the beauty of passion, the Inquisition and the bullfight.

BISHOP

You like contradictions.

GUEST

The figure of Christ is a contradiction, wrapped in outlines that are changeable and as many-hued as the rainbow. Every race, every school, every epoch, has contributed something toward revealing his figure. The biography of the Saviour repeats all shades of stories about him, from candor to horror, and his soul lends itself to all expressions of emotion. When Lentulus says, "His countenance

inspires love and fear, at the same time," he sums up the declarations of both psalmist and prophet, and speaks the truth.

BISHOP

It is not easy for one's reason to take in the complex personality of Jesus Christ, a celestial Person in the Trinity and a terrestrial Person in history. Such a mystery may be understood only by faith, and perhaps it could not be fully represented by pictorial art.

GUEST

The double nature of Jesus has been expressed in the "Cenaculum" of Leonardo, by a remarkable æsthetic intuition. It is the moment in which the Master has announced his betrayal by Judas, without naming him; his disciples, amazed, turn to him, asking who is to be the traitor, and the Master, with all the consciousness of inevitable tragedy hanging over him, clenches his right hand in deep horror, while his left lies relaxed on the table, in divine resignation. The one is the hand of Jesus, the Man doomed to die; the other is the hand of Christ, the God who will rise again.

BISHOP

Have you seen the "Supper" of Leonardo?

GUEST

Yes, Your Grace. One of the objects of my journey to Milan was to see the "Cenácolo vinciano," which is preserved in Santa Maria delle

Grazie, where it was painted as a fresco, on the walls of the old refectory.

BISHOP

I would envy you that privilege, if envy were not a sin. I am getting old and shall not be able to visit Italy again. I am told that the fresco is beginning to peel off and at the end will disappear. How ephemeral are the things of earth! Only the works of the Lord remain. . . .

GUEST

If humanity is not eternal, the Church of Christ will also disappear with it.

BISHOP

Possibly. But to live on in the kingdom of heaven.

GUEST

Saint Paul says that a man has an animal body and a spiritual body. This is in accord with the teachings of the esoteric writers, who call them an astral body and a physical body, both constituent elements of man. The animal or physical body perishes at death, which is nothing else than the birth of the astral or spiritual body, in a sphere or plane which is invisible to us.

BISHOP

The butterfly which comes flying from its chrysalis might give us an idea of death.

GUEST

That truth of the mystics is that which the

learned materialists deny, just as the mass of the people denies the truths of the wise men. For the ignorant man, the sun is born and dies, just as man is born and dies, whose earthly figure, however, is nothing more than an illusory image, created in the physical plane by the spirit, in the same way that light, thrown on the plane of a screen, creates an ephemeral shadow. This is that which Buddhist Asia expressed with the idea of the Maya, and that which made Christian Europe look on life as a dream. Bodily death itelf is but a dream. . . .

BISHOP

The dust of earth, from which the body of man is made, and the vapor of air, into which his illusions vanish, are similar. But there is a difference between Buddhist belief, which leads to complete annihilation of the individual, and Christian belief, which leads to life eternal. Birth is an incarnation, death is a dis-incarnation, and both are the putting off of earthly raiment to put on true Being, which is invisible.

GUEST

All this, Your Grace, is what Jesus Christ has revealed to us in his duality with the mystery of his origin and resurrection. If Christ is the key to man, Man is the key to Jesus. In current language, air is nothing, yet air is the means of life on earth. The invisible atmosphere allows the eye to see, and an ethereal planet enshrouds the solid planet on which we dwell. Man is similar to the earth, of a solid and changeable form, which is accompanied,

as by an imperceptible and vital atmosphere, by the reality of the man whom we do not see.

BISHOP

You have just emitted a profound truth and one which is not in disagreement with the tenets of our faith.

GUEST

It is true that it is contrary to neither faith nor reason, and perhaps it reconciles the two. Thanks to it, I think I have understood the duality represented in the name of Jesus Christ: Man and God. I never lose sight of the fact that the Gospels alternately call him, "Son of God" and "Son of Man," both of these being expressions of prophetic origin which in the Master take on new significance, in accord with that duality.

BISHOP

For that reason the great Teacher in his preaching defines that which is of God, conscience, whose money is the Host, and that which is of Cæsar, whose money is the coin.

GUEST

I have in my collection a small silver crucifix which has at the four extremities of the cross several Peruvian coins, which reveal the origin of this peculiar piece of crude workmanship. Perhaps the artificer thought that he increased the value of his offering by adding to it the contents of his purse, but by doing so he created a symbol: the symbol

that the sacrifice of man, or of his invisible Christ, is brought about by the nails of his carnal crucifixion and also by the money of his social crucifixion. This confirms that which we have just said: that in nature or in history, Jesus is the key to man.

BISHOP

I am glad to hear you say this. And that cross of coins was inspired, perhaps, by the pieces of silver of Judas, in his self-seeking cruelty.

GUEST

The image of Christ, changeable, as we have seen, is resolved, then, into the image of Man, and thus his spiritual image, also multiform, variable and dynamic, resolves itself into a God, but a God who is human and living. This is that which especially distinguishes him from the pagan gods, who are but unchangeable and physical allegories, and it may be that this explains why the Church left the image of Christ to be worked out in the various interpretations of art. To the Church belongs, as an integral part of worship, the extensive iconography which we have just examined. In it everything is uncertain: the origin, the model, the interpretation. I have a feeling, however, that there is a mystery in these varying images, on which we may well meditate.

BISHOP

When one has a warm faith, meditation is not necessary: contemplation is sufficient.

GUEST

I have meditated on the images of Christ, and that is one form of my prayers.

BISHOP

That may be a form of adoration and prayer, but you have probably practiced it without faith.

GUEST

You can help me.

BISHOP

Help is easy, and is expressed in this counsel: return to Christ.

GUEST

I have never left him.

BISHOP

Are you a Catholic?

GUEST

Born in the bosom of a Catholic family, with no immediate ancestors who were not old Christians, in the orthodox manner of early Spanish America, I was baptized by order of my parents. I kept the commandments of the Church during my childhood, and even later, when philosophic studies estranged me from the Catholic Church, I never ceased to consider myself profoundly Christian, in the broadest sense of the word.

BISHOP

If one is not a good Catholic, it is not possible to be a good Christian.

GUEST

When, as a child, I attended church services in the village where I was born, I was impressed, especially in the processions of Holy Week, by the pathetic suggestions of Jesus represented by images whose visage, sometimes sorrowful and sometimes pleasing, left in my conscience the emotional sentiment on which my religious sensibility fed for many years.

BISHOP

That I can easily see, and that is why you did wrong in withdrawing from our Church.

GUEST

The psychological motive of my doubts consisted in a double process of affirmation and negation. The images had been for my infantile mind the medium through which I was assured of the existence of Jesus Christ, as a historical Personage; but, on coming to know all their iconography, the lack of an original prototype and an ecclesiastical canon disconcerted me. Thus I came to doubt the model which they presupposed.

BISHOP

I have never heard such a confession.

GUEST

I believe you, since my situation is that of neither an iconoclast nor an idolater. It is not even that of an austere Protestant, who flees from images. As an artist, I have worshiped them; as a mystic, I have sought the divine idea they represent; and,

searching for the Only Christ of my dreams among the many images of Jesus, I arrived, as do pilgrims, at Rome, to search for the secret which my soul craved.

BISHOP

What did you find?

GUEST

I found what I have already told you: that the Church has no authentic pictorial records of the physical person of Jesus, as it has in regard to his spiritual person in the text of the Gospels; that a vague figure of Christ emerges, during the early centuries of the era, confused with enigmatical signs and pagan myths; that the Church left to artists the representation of its Founder, as best it seemed to each one, according to the changing models of each place or the personal ideas of the interpreters; and that the image of Jesus has varied during twenty centuries, remodeled by the influence of races, regions, epochs, cultures, schools, and individual temperaments.

BISHOP

That is to say, that the discipline characteristic of the Church disappears when it is a matter of the earthly likeness of our Lord; is that it?

GUEST

Exactly. And I might even add that in our time, new variations in the iconography of Christ are constantly appearing, both in and outside of worship.

BISHOP

Let us see.

GUEST

Inside the Church we have to-day new forms created by names of Christian origin: the *Lord of Patience,* the *Lord of Health,* the *Lord of the Miracle,* the *Lord of Expiation,* the *Lord of Great Power,* new "Names of Christ," as Fray Luis would say, to which correspond certain images of profound psychological expression. All this without taking into consideration certain objects which allude to Christ, real hieroglyphics of the Passion, such as the crown of thorns and the nails of the crucifixion; or such anatomical members, which impress one by their material crudeness, as the Heart of Jesus, which is replacing the total image of Jesus Christ, and is to-day the object of increasing devotion.

BISHOP

All this involves a mystical and moral significance which is edifying for Christian piety.

GUEST

Outside the Church, in the same way, we find a new diversity of images, whose physiognomy derives from religious individualism, engendered by Protestantism, rationalism, romanticism, liberalism, and the philosophic neo-mysticism. I refer, for example, to the painting, "Christ Showing His Wounds," by Von de Woestyne, whose pathetic ugliness vexes one; to "Christ Wandering Through the World," by Edouard von Gebbardt, in which he

is painted as a kind of beggar, a vagabond aged by his sufferings until he has no appearance of the traditional Christ, either in age or type; to the "Recognition of the World," by Burton, in which canvas Christ, from behind a grating, looks out with fascinated eyes on some Bacchic vines. In all these there is something pathologic, because of his tortured expression. You will remember, Your Grace, that according to the Gospels, many held that Jesus was possessed of an evil spirit, and was a madman.

BISHOP

The testimony of the Gospels on that point proves nothing, save the lack of understanding on the part of certain persons in the presence of that marvelous Being.

GUEST

In this series of contemporary "Christs" I might recall, among other canvases, that one by the Belgian Wiertz, "The Parties Judged by Christ," of anti-clerical intention; the "Jesus Weeps Over the City," by the French painter, Flandrin, in whose background there appears a modern city; and two sculptures, the "Come Unto Me," by the Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen, a work of classic forms, and the "Christ" of the Italian Bistolfi, who walks the earth with a striking gesture of combined loathing and benevolence. The humanization of God is complete in these works, especially in that by Bistolfi, of whom I have a photographic copy with an autographic dedication of the artist; and this series,

which might be called the series of the "Lay Christs," includes the bronzes of two Argentine artists: the "Christ" of Alonso, which crowns the Andes as a symbol of peace, and the "Christ" of Zonza Briano, which adorns the Recoleta, the cemetery of Buenos Aires, like a symbol of consolation. And we could even image another, which would be located in the Port, looking toward the River Plate, with open arms—the "Christ of Fraternity."

BISHOP

You leave me thoughtful.

GUEST

The revolutionary, democratic, and individualistic spirit, characteristic of our time, is revealed in these new manifestations of Christian iconography, and they prove that Christ lives, even outside the Church, in the conscience of the world.

BISHOP

Heresy is less serious than atheism.

GUEST

The modern soul is as complex in its liberty as was the soul of Christ, and it has given us, together with the revolutionary creations of the social Christ, idealistic creations like the "Light of the World," by Holman Hunt, a painting which is in England, and "Jesus Liberates Psyche," by Max Klinger, which is in Vienna, both highly decorative and of symbolic earnestness. I will mention, finally, the "Jesus in Gethsemane," by Bloch, in which a

white angel is comforting the fainting Jesus, and the "Ecce Homo," by Scheffer, which is that of a man pale white in color and sublime in his calm nudity. The changes in form and meaning correspond, as you see, to the ideas which modern exegetes have held in regard to Jesus.

BISHOP

The liberty of our time is limitless.

GUEST

It is a productive liberty, but perhaps no more so than that of old, if you consider the Spanish-American "Trinity" which I showed you to-day, an image that belonged to a colonial chapel. As we have already said, a very free change has been made in it: the Jehovah of the Ages is a Christ; the Dove of the Spirit is a Christ; the Christ who fuses them into a single figure is a creole of Spanish type, and the Virgin whom the Three Divine Persons crown with simultaneous and symmetrical gesture, is a good-looking *chola* girl of Peru, with swarthy face, high cheek bones, and loose black hair. The "Christs" of Rubens are not like this one, nor are the "Madonnas" of Raphael.

BISHOP

You speak irreverently.

GUEST

No, Your Grace: women who could scarcely be called saintly, like the sister of Aretino, who was a courtesan of Arezzo, posed for some of the "Ma-

donnas" of the Italian Renaissance. In regard to the "Christs," the images are innumerable in their diversity, as we have just seen, and it is better not to know who were, sometimes, the models who posed for them.

BISHOP

It has never occurred to me to think of such things, which would seem to be superficial, but in reality have profound significance. We have always thought of the pompous liturgy of our Church as one of its greatest spiritual forces. You have just shown me how a new heresy may spring from Catholicism.

GUEST

No, Your Grace. Catholic idolatry estranged me from its worship, but its images have reconciled me to Christian truth. The Church is the historical miracle of Jesus Christ. Christianity cannot be historically explained without taking Christ as the starting-point, and although his bodily figure appears but vaguely outlined in its far-off beginnings, it grows clearer through twenty centuries as a creation of Christian art, the revealer of a great mystery. The Temple, with its plan and its symbolism, is an allegory of the universe. Plastic art has represented the flesh made divine through love; lyric art has given us the song of the soul in its homesick longing for heaven.

BISHOP

You speak as an artist rather than a believer.

GUEST

Every true artist is a true believer. Jesus of Nazareth, as the incarnation of an invisible Master, was a Son of God, and as the realization of Christ incarnate, he was a Son of man. The multiform iconography of Jesus is explained by the fact that Jesus Christ is not *a* man, but *the* Man; to understand it better, he was all men. Iconography presents him as child, or adult, short or tall, ugly or beautiful, dark or fair, meek or rebellious, as Jew or Gentile. Christ is humanity in all its forms. Thus the Church gives him to us, and from this fact there emerges a new interpretation of Christian doctrine.

BISHOP

A bold and perilous undertaking! New interpretations are not needed when there is already a divine revelation.

GUEST

It is that divine revelation which I interpret. The body of the Man, with arms widespread for love and sacrifice, is outlined on the cross, the religious symbol of the visible man, and of the flesh which crucifies the invisible spirit.

BISHOP

Strange lucubrations!

GUEST

The advent of Christ in Jesus was a historical fact which was consummated for our spiritual initiation, but the invisible Christ whom the common

people adore through images, lies buried in the heart of every man, awaiting his resurrection.

BISHOP

Strange lucubrations!

GUEST

When Pilate, in the Prætorium, said, before the sarcastic multitude, *"Ecce Homo,"* he did not imagine all that he expressed in that phrase. Jesus Christ awaited his sentence, ready for the supreme sacrifice, sublime in his spirituality, when his flesh was suffering the greatest torment and humiliation. *"Behold the Man!"* said Pilate, standing before men, and pointing to Jesus, and that phrase illumines all the Christian mystery.

BISHOP

Strange lucubrations!

GUEST

If the visible Jesus of the images is thus understood, the invisible Christ of souls creates in us his Bethlehem for the birth and his Calvary for the resurrection. This explains, also, why the cross universally substitutes the human image of Jesus Christ, and why the Master said: "He that believeth in Me, let him take up his cross and follow me," or, in other words, let him take up his body of sorrows, in order to excel in the work of the Spirit, the *via crucis* of his martyrdom and his example. The cross of Christ, distinct from the Swastika and the Tau, which other religions wor-

ship, is the figure made by a shadow projected on the earth, beneath the light of heaven, by the body of a Man with arms outspread for the sacrifice of Love.

II

THE WORD OF CHRIST

The Master says: "I am the Truth. . ."

II

THE WORD OF CHRIST

GUEST

Last night we were discussing the bodily image of Jesus. To-night I want us to talk about his spiritual image.

BISHOP

What do you mean by his spiritual image?

GUEST

His personality, as it is revealed in his teaching. I see here the Gospels and many other works of sound learning which will aid us in our investigations. And, in looking over the titles of the books in your library, while waiting for you, I recognized some that I have in my own.

BISHOP

Last night you roamed about as you wished when speaking of iconography; but to-night, if you wish to discuss the Scriptures, you will encounter many obstacles. The Church has its authority carefully defined in these matters, and you cannot run according to your own free will. You may begin.

GUEST

I will begin by declaring that I accept the author-

ity of the Church in all that refers to canonical texts.

BISHOP

You begin well.

GUEST

I only beg that you will now allow me to state the conclusions of my own studies, the result of much devout reading of holy books.

BISHOP

Although the Church permits such reading, there is nothing so dangerous as individual interpretation by secular students.

GUEST

If the Church permits the reading of its authorized texts, how can it prevent the reader from interpreting what he reads according to his own understanding?

BISHOP

That is the human side of it; but in such reading there is a serious risk for the soul. To apply free thought to the solution of the mysteries of religion is exceedingly dangerous. And when it is a question of the interpretation of Sacred Texts, the danger is even greater.

GUEST

I do not pretend to reject the dogmas of the Church.

BISHOP

The Gospels suggest problems of philosophy and

history which are closely related to revealed truth. Only he who accepts the latter and who reads the Scriptures with devotion, can hope to understand the divine thought that inspires them. The Church is the sole depository of the Gospel, and it is the Church which, during many centuries, has held the keys to its interpretation.

GUEST

The liberty of contemporaneous criticism, in its controversies, presupposes a spirit which, like my own, is naturally inquisitive; but I believe I have reached a point of serenity in which the gospel, if this name means "Good News," may be such to me, through the spirit in which I interpret the words of the Great Teacher.

BISHOP

Nevertheless, I consider any independence of attitude in such matters very dangerous.

GUEST

Keep in mind that I have come to confess to you, and that I loyally present my sincere comments, as though they were sins.

BISHOP

Let us hear your confession.

GUEST

I have learned that numerous versions of the life and teaching of Christ, under the name of *Memories of the Apostles,* were circulated during the early

years of our era; but that the Church set apart four of them as worthy of confidence, rejecting the others.

BISHOP

That is true; it consecrated four testimonies; that of Saint Matthew; that of Saint Mark; that of Saint Luke, and that of Saint John, because it considers them written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who is the source of all truth.

GUEST

Notwithstanding, no one of the four evangelists testifies to certain things which the Church accepts, or accepted formerly, and which spring from rejected apocryphal sources.

BISHOP

I do not know to what you refer.

GUEST

The story of Veronica, for example, and that of the Redeemer's descent into hell, after his resurrection, to free Adam and the prophets. We were talking about Veronica last night, and I do not need to say anything more on that point. The story of the descent into hell, which reminds one of the legend of Orpheus, was popular in the Middle Ages, as were other similar legends which entered into the common fund of Christian belief and exercised great influence on the imagery of the cathedrals.

BISHOP

I had good reason in saying to you a moment ago

that in order to read the Gospels special preparation is necessary; a preparation of the soul by faith, and of the intelligence by means of the study of theology, patristic literature, and ecclesiastical history. The questions you suggest are intricate and require time for consideration. On the other hand, there is a point at which religious sentiment may be transmuted into poesy, and this is permissible when it does not conflict with dogma.

GUEST

I understand: a religious theme may be converted into a literary theme. Dante developed his poem from theological doctrine. Christian musicians and artists have done the same.

BISHOP

Art, however, is distinct from religion.

GUEST

I do not confuse them, and I carefully distinguish all that refers to art in its intimate relation to religion. But if the Church left art free, by admitting into its liturgy contributions even from paganism and demotic writings, why did it adopt a less liberal attitude when treating of the Scriptures?

BISHOP

Because the Scriptures are historical "documents," in the literal sense of the word, and because the mission of Jesus was not of an æsthetic, but of a moral character. For the physical figure, the symbol of the man was sufficient; but for the moral

creation, there was need of the testimony of the authentic Gospels.

GUEST

I have already confessed that I accept the four Gospels, just as the Church gives them to me; but, on reading them, I have been forced to think that the Church has accepted apocryphal traditions, like those I have mentioned.

BISHOP

The Church has given her verdict for those who believe in her, and those who have left her merit only the pity due to them.

GUEST

Pity may be a form of presumption.

BISHOP

Such a sentiment has no place in our Church.

GUEST

But it may be found in men who represent it.

BISHOP

Not at all, if one is a real Christian.

GUEST

It is very hard, Your Grace, to be a real Christian. . . .

BISHOP

It is not hard when one humbly obeys her who is our spiritual mother, the Spouse of Christ, the Daughter of the Lord. If one does not believe in her, Christian truth is dissipated in the useless

wrangling of the sects. If one does believe in her, the Gospels are illumined by the light of their divine origin, in the perfection of their meaning.

GUEST

That is what I am looking for; the perfection of their meaning, and I beg you to help me understand it.

BISHOP

Only faith can make clear the meaning of the Scriptures; but faith, which unifies, comes from the Holy Spirit, and not from human intelligence which is anarchic and divisive.

GUEST

Theology was born of the intelligence. Francis de Assisi is a representative of pure sentiment; but Thomas Aquinas represents the genial faculty of reason. The Church has a philosophy.

BISHOP

The philosophy of the Church is not that of unbelievers.

GUEST

It is not. But it is based on the need of satisfying the demands of human reason, within the limits of dogma. I am merely confessing the miseries of my understanding, as another sinner confesses the wretchedness of his sensuality. I come to you in the name of Him who said: "Ask and it shall be given you." The Gospel of Mark has transmitted to us that watchword. You dare not violate it,

BISHOP

I offer you my help, although my learning is scant.

GUEST

In a case like mine, you do not need extraordinary learning, but, rather, a little patience in listening and a little tolerance in replying.

BISHOP

You have told me that you accept the authority of the canonical Gospels, but I note that you base your arguments on the Apocrypha. . . .

GUEST

The Apocrypha define the others, by exclusion. But I will not mention them again, since it displeases you.

BISHOP

It is not that it displeases me. . . . Go on.

GUEST

I will go on to confess that, since the canonical books are four, it disturbs me to hear it said, "The Gospels," in the plural, as though it were merely a matter of four human testimonies, and not "The Gospel," in the singular, as one should speak of the origin of revealed truth. The text of the Decalogue, promulgated by Moses, was one and one only, both in origin and text, while the four Gospels differ among themselves, just as pictorial images of Christ differ from one another, as we were pointing out last night.

BISHOP

The four Gospels complement each other.

GUEST

Just as images in iconography complement each other.

BISHOP

Images are innumerable. The Gospels are but four.

GUEST

Four are sufficient to make one inquire how unity may be established among them. A book of Lamennais, *Les Evangiles,* comments on them as a single text of moral doctrine, but it is clear that they are different testimonies; and the book entitled *Meditations sur l'Evangile,* by Bossuet, is not like that of Lamennais, either in its plan or its inspiration. Between the Master and a disciple of to-day, four biographies are interposed. Light which passes through a prism is broken up into colors. Only the activity of one's own understanding can fuse those colors into the sublime light of its origin, as Your Grace has well said.

BISHOP

First of all, tell me in what respect, in your opinion, the Gospels differ?

GUEST

Reading them, I have noticed a difference as to material, since some include anecdotes which others omit; there is also a difference in wording, because

expressions attributed to the Master are not given in the same form, not even in such an important discourse as that of the Sermon on the Mount, nor even in the most important parables and declarations; and there are also differences of inspiration, due to the fact that each one of the Gospels comes from the pen of an author who differs from the others both in style and in the object he had in mind when writing.

BISHOP

You speak like a literary critic.

GUEST

No, Your Grace; I am merely pointing out differences that may be easily perceived by anyone of ordinary intelligence.

BISHOP

Let us see the basis of your argument.

GUEST

It is sufficient to cite the first chapter of each Gospel. . . .

BISHOP

A warning: the division into chapters, as also the numbering of the verses, is a relatively modern artifice, introduced to make the use of quotations less difficult. The original manuscripts do not have them.

GUEST

I knew that; but, Your Grace, I respectfully suggest that if a moment ago I spoke like a literary critic, you now speak like a paleographer.

BISHOP

That is a suggestion without importance.

GUEST

I have said "the first chapter" merely to give an exact reference. If it suits you better, let us say "the beginning of each Gospel." It is to this that I wish to refer; to the manner of beginning each narrative. That is sufficient.

BISHOP

I understand.

GUEST

Saint Matthew begins by giving the generation of Jesus, the son of David, the son of Abraham, up to the virginal conception. Saint Mark begins his Gospel saying, "As it is written in the prophets, Behold I send my messenger before thy face," and then goes on to speak of the Baptist as the forerunner of the "Messiah." Saint Luke begins as a simple chronicler, citing the human sources of his narrative and referring to the exact time of the happenings which he describes: "Herod being tetrarch of Galilee," or "Pontius Pilate being Governor of Judæa, in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar." Saint John begins his Gospel with a profoundly metaphysical declaration: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and thus continues to the statement of his thesis in the fourteenth verse, "And the Word was made flesh." These scant references are sufficient to show that the

four Gospels differ in their beginnings, just as they differ in plan, in style, and in the definite purpose of each version.

BISHOP

Are these examples the result of your own study?

GUEST

I think so.

BISHOP

I inquire, for I know the den of such vermin; all that comes from Renan, the infidel.

GUEST

I do not think that Renan makes just these statements, although he says worse things.

BISHOP

This is what Renan wrote: "If Jesus spoke as Matthew says he did, he could not have spoken as John says he did." This is the poisonous source of your declarations.

GUEST

That may be true. But the author of *The Life of Jesus* maintains that the Gospel of Luke is a composition based on preceding documents, and that it is the work of a man who chose, sifted, and then combined them. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark do not have the same personal stamp, he says, although their air of truth impresses one, and they were probably written in the Aramæan tongue by companions of Jesus. The Gospel of John, he

adds, while it is true that it has the stamp of a noble spirit, presents the real happenings as somewhat vague or as recalled from a great distance, both as regards space and time, while the discourses of Jesus suffer from Gnostic obscurity, metaphysical treason and the aridness of abstract dogma.

BISHOP

Gnostic obscurity! Metaphysical treason! Aridness of abstract dogma! How well do I recognize in those phrases the insidious literary skill of that apostate. He claimed that he loved Jesus, but he loved him with the perverse sensual love of a courtesan, defiling him with the voluptuous caresses of a master writer.

GUEST

Do not become irritated about the book of Renan, since we are now speaking of a better book. The French critic—whom I had not wished to quote and whom you were the first to mention—addresses himself to the task of proving the chronology and origin of the Gospels, since he sustains the thesis that they have passed through three stages. These are: the documental stage, as illustrated by Mark and Matthew, whose original writings do not now exist; then, the stage of fragmentary literary compositions, based on those lost documents, but which to-day are mingled with the texts of the above-named Gospels; and, finally, the stage of deliberate editing, carried out for the purpose of reconciling the different versions, as he believed was the case in the Gospel of Luke. In regard to the Gospel of

John, he considers it a later work, different from the synoptical Gospels in its purpose and spirit.

BISHOP

Well? What of that? . . . .

GUEST

That all this refers to the paleographic origin of the Gospels, and Renan bases final judgment on such inferences when he declares that these biographies of the Gospels are not like those of Suetonius, for example, but more like the Hagiographa, in which historical truth, popular legend, and the tendency to point a moral are blended, as is also the case in the lives of certain saints which were written during the Middle Ages.

BISHOP

It is impossible to compare the two kinds of writing.

GUEST

Of course it is, nor do I pretend to make such a comparison. My viewpoint is very different.

BISHOP

What is it? Explain yourself.

GUEST

I can do so, very simply. It is the same as that of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church.

BISHOP

Now I understand even less.

GUEST

I consider that all the questions that have been raised in regard to the origin and character of these superficial biographies of Christ, have been rightly solved in the form desired by the Church: the date and the language in which they were written, the paleography of the manuscripts and the philology of the texts contained in them, the translations from the original tongues, the mutilations they have suffered, the variations that have been noted, the oral tradition of the first apostles and the authentic editing of their work, even when the evangelists did not publish their narratives as does a modern writer who first prepares his manuscript, then corrects it, and finally publishes his book. In regard to all these questions, I hold to the teachings of the Church, and, if you will allow me, I will recall some passages taken from the book *Jesus Christ,* written by Father Didon, a work which saw the light a long time after Renan and written with the evident purpose of combating, in our century, the influence of secular criticism.

BISHOP

I know the book of Father Didon, and it seems to me admirable.

GUEST

I also admire it, and I am glad to cite it in your presence, since it was edited with the *nihil obstat* of Rome, and has merited a commendatory letter from Cardinal Rampolla in which he predicts abundant profit for the faithful who read it.

BISHOP

Father Didon, who is a lecturer in sacred theology, belongs to the Order of Dominican Friars, which champions dogma. The Holy Father sent him his apostolic blessing because his work was found to be in accord with theological doctrine, and the writer, according to the *imprimatur,* vanquishes the theories of infidelity on their own ground when he appeals to the positive arguments of history.

GUEST

I was coming to that. In the introduction to his *Jesus Christ,* Father Didon studies the problem of the Gospels as documents, and recognizes that there was first an oral Gospel, consisting of the preaching of the apostles, the immediate disciples of Jesus, and the narration of the life and the word of the Master, for the edification of the neophytes of the early Church. It was later, probably about the year 40 of our era, that the first written record appeared.

BISHOP

Do you refer to that of Saint Matthew?

GUEST

Yes, to Saint Matthew, the publican, who wrote his work in Hebrew for the Jews of Palestine, using the language which they spoke at that time. This was the Aramæan dialect, a mixture of Chaldaic and Syriac, the same language that Jesus himself spoke. Later on, a disciple of Saint Peter, called Mark, composed the Gospel which bears his name, in

Greek, with the approbation of Saint Peter himself. This is shorter than that of Matthew, eliminates some of the Messianic features of that narrative which was destined to be read by the Jews, and accentuates the popular story of the public life of Jesus in Galilee, since it was intended for circulation outside of Palestine, as in Rome and other provinces of the empire. The Gospel of Luke appeared later. He was probably a disciple of Saint Paul, a converted Jew, who may have known the mother of Jesus. He used Hebrew sources, introduced some chronological order in the biography of the Master, and collected the latest traditions, filling up some of the blanks in the two former narrations. He did this to such a degree that he included, as an entirely new contribution, five miracles, twelve parables, and some intimate details in regard to the last days of the Master, especially those relating to his entry into Jerusalem and the resurrection, in regard to which the other writers say nothing. Is that not so? . . .

BISHOP

I cannot deny that you have summed up this intricate question in a very clear manner. The truth of such facts is based on Papias, Eusebius, Irenæus, Jerome, Clement of Alexandria, and others of the early Church Fathers. But all that you have just said proves nothing more than that an oral Gospel circulated among the immediate disciples of Jesus, and that its testimony, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, was soon carried over into the written narrative of the apostles.

GUEST

Still, there is no proof that these documents were copied, one from another, successively, nor that all came from a common source. Of the three synoptic Gospels, so called because they coincide in general in the statements of the main facts, only that of Matthew may be considered the testimony of an actual eyewitness. Neither Mark nor Luke was an immediate disciple of Jesus, and, besides, their narratives have come down to us in Greek, with all the risk for a careful transmission of the actual word of the Master which is implied in the use of tradition as a medium, and the translation of their ideas into different tongues.

BISHOP

Saint John, the fourth writer, was the beloved disciple of Jesus, and you can say nothing against him.

GUEST

Saint John, the beloved disciple, wrote when he was an old man, from Patmos or Ephesus, at the request of the churches of Asia, to affirm the divinity of Jesus, rather than give the story of his life, for the purpose of combating the philosophical heresies of the Greeks in regard to the nature of the God-Man; but his Gospel has also been transmitted to us in Greek.

BISHOP

Nevertheless, it is an established fact, as proved by a fragment of the canon of Moratori, that under

the pontificate of Pius I, in 142, these four Gospels, according to Didon, were in existence; that the Church recognized no others, but read them in the present order, as inspired by God himself; and that dating from the same epoch, or from the former, there are certain manuscripts which enable us to go back through a Latin version to one in Greek, with marginal notes in Syriac, until we reach the Sinaitic manuscript, which, according to Tertullian, is still preserved by the apostolic churches.

GUEST

That original manuscript, as you know, does not exist. In any case, it would contain the four narratives, whose chronology I do not discuss and whose text I do not reject. All my reasoning is reduced to an effort to show that the present canonical text, which is authorized by the Church, gives us four distinct interpretations of Christ which differ among themselves.

BISHOP

They differ, but they are not contradictory.

GUEST

Before printing became general in Europe, the migration of a text, as happened with the medieval chronicles, generally caused differences with reference to the lost original; but I insist on reminding you that I pay no attention to variations in the supposed text of the lost originals, but that I am calling your attention to actual differences in the four canonical biographies.

BISHOP

What are those differences?

GUEST

In the four Gospels one notes differences of background and of spirit which reveal a different immediate origin, although the mediate source may have been divine inspiration or the real event to which they refer.

BISHOP

Even accepting the statement that those four documents are the work of authors who were very different in their culture one from the other; that they were written in different epochs and in distinct languages; and that they may have been changed by copying, corrections, and interpolations, yet no one can deny that from them there springs the same impression of human reality and divine mystery. They are four distinct testimonies to a single historical event, and from the four comes the complete personality of a single outstanding personality.

GUEST

That is true, but it is also true that the four writers differ fundamentally.

BISHOP

Not so much, my friend.

GUEST

They differ, Your Grace, and the fact is explained by the diversity of origin, language, and

purpose, which ecclesiastical criticism to-day recognizes in these documents. A satisfactory definition of the protagonist of the four testimonies requires a real effort of personal creation in the mind of the present-day reader. Moreover, the way in which modern readers interpret those narratives is heterodox.

BISHOP

Explain yourself.

GUEST

I remember having read in an English book that the Gospel of Matthew is a brief written for the purpose of proving, to reactionary Jews, that Christ is the Messiah who was announced by the prophets; that the Gospel of Mark, addressed to Gentiles throughout the Roman Empire, points out in a methodical manner that Jesus lived only to do good, since even his miracles were acts of charity; Luke presents, not so much the One who was sent of God, as God himself, the Saviour of the world; John replies to the heretics of Greek philosophy, and evokes the great Teacher, the Friend of his disciples, the incarnate Word, whose mystical Passion through the medium of the narration, exerts a marvelous power on the human heart.

BISHOP

Who says that?

GUEST

The *Biblical Cyclopedia,* a work of great learning and moderation, edited by Professor Eadie.

BISHOP

It may be a Protestant work.

GUEST

It may be; but I cite it to prove that the difference which exists in the four Gospels has been pointed out in different ways and by many commentators.

BISHOP

Such a thing proves nothing.

GUEST

Edward Shuré, in his book, *The Great Initiated,* dedicates a chapter to Jesus, based on the Gospels, which, he says, must be compared and corrected because, although they are equally authentic, they are so in a different manner. And then he defines the differences in this way: Matthew and Mark give us the letter and the deed, the public acts and words of Jesus; Luke, in his attractive way, allows us to glimpse the meaning of the mysteries shrouded by the poetic veil of legend; it is the Gospel of Soul, of Woman, and of Love; Saint John reveals those mysteries, the meaning of doctrine, and his esoteric reserve, because of which Clement of Alexandria (one of the few Christian bishops who held the key of universal esoterism) has with reason called it the Gospel of the Spirit.

BISHOP

I do not know the author whom you quote.

GUEST

He is a well-known theosophist.

BISHOP

You come with a bad lawyer, since the Holy Father has condemned theosophy.

GUEST

Still, a deeply Christian sentiment is evident in the book of Shuré, and you will be glad to know that he scorns the mythical theory of Strauss and the psychological theory of Renan. He calls the *Life of Jesus,* of the first named, "a planetary system without a sun," and the *Life of Jesus,* of the second, "a planetary system with a pallid sun, lacking creative force"; and these are judgments which I accept. On the other hand, the chapter in the book of Shuré, in which he treats of Jesus, derives its inspiration from Oriental arcana, as does the Gospel of John, which gives the key to the deeds and words gathered together by the synoptics.

BISHOP

It may be that you are right, but those false mystics seem to me suspicious, although they cause less spiritual ruin than that breed of apostates like Renan, or that race of heretics like Strauss, whose books, with their satanic learning and their diabolical dialectic, have poisoned the purest sources of faith.

GUEST

If you will keep calm, you will note that the Church itself recognizes the differences, which I have taken the liberty of pointing out, in the four canonical texts.

BISHOP

How is that?

GUEST

Didon makes the following statement: "The first three Gospels relate that which is visible of Jesus, the fourth that which is not visible." And, then, distinguishing between the synoptics themselves, he concludes: "If Saint Mark is the evangelist of power, Saint Luke is the evangelist of mercy." A little farther on, Father Didon adds: "The writers of ancient times, in their predilection for symbols, have averred that Mark represented a lion, while Luke was pictured as the victim, the bull of the sacrifice." Let us remember, on our own account, that the Church bestowed on John the symbol of an eagle, a bird that penetrated into far heights and thus sees into the very depths of the heavens. . . .

BISHOP

I would be glad if you had as great capacity for believing as you show in arguing.

GUEST

I am simply searching for the truth, wherever it may be found, and there is nothing so Christian as to ask it from Him who said, "I am the truth."

BISHOP

The Master said that, referring to the salvation of the soul through faith in the Saviour, but he did not refer to the changeable learning of men.

GUEST

We are men, and of the spirit of man there are

born, equally, the faith of the saint and the skepticism of the sophist.

BISHOP

But it is only of the Spirit of God that divine truth, which is unchangeable, may be born.

GUEST

I believe it, and it is for this very reason that I follow Him who also said, "I am the way."

BISHOP

To make you lose the way, there are Pharisees of learning in our time, just as there were formerly of the Torah, and there are Sadducees of erudition who have lost their souls.

GUEST

Possibly you are unjust to the work of the critics who have purified and explained the Scriptures.

BISHOP

That work was begun by the holy fathers of the Church, and they are the real founders of religious exegesis. I am not protesting against that discipline which is as old as the Church itself, but against the destructive spirit in which it has been carried on by lay rationalism. The desolate sensuality of the modern world is, in large part, the result of this thorough but sterile labor on behalf of moral edification.

GUEST

Scientific criticism, so far from invalidating the text of the Gospels, has rendered them more hu-

man and more forceful. Considered simply as historical documents, they have recovered an authority which they had lost in the eyes of unbelievers. As a result of modern exegesis, it would be as arbitrary to hold doubts regarding them as it would be to doubt all written sources of ancient history. If, because of skepticism, we suppress Christ, we might with equal reason suppress Tiberius and other personages of his time. Without our assent, human history would thus be obscured in the mists of antiquity; but, with documental criticism, the Gospels are converted into unimpeachable testimonies of an event too real to be denied.

BISHOP

The showy scandal of secular learning was not needed to make us recognize the veracity of these testimonies. The way in which the Gospel of Saint Luke opens has an undeniable accent of historical truth: "Forasmuch as many," he says, "have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed." To doubt such documents, as you well say, is the same as to hold up to doubt the most reliable of all historical testimonies.

GUEST

You are right, and for that reason I began my confession by declaring that I accept the testimony of the Gospels.

BISHOP

There are persons who reject them.

GUEST

I do not count myself among such, above all when I confess to you that if Christianity, which is a real, millennial fact, is based on such documents, that reason alone would be sufficient to convince me that they are true.

BISHOP

You are appealing to a pragmatic reason.

GUEST

The fact that a reason is pragmatic does not necessarily invalidate it.

BISHOP

I would prefer reasons of another kind.

GUEST

Those which appeal to the sentiment?

BISHOP

Yes.

GUEST

I also invoke them, and, for that reason, I am searching in the Gospels to find Him who said, "I am the life."

BISHOP

Thanks to those rudimentary testimonies, the embryonic truth has come down to us, kindling faith in hearts which are capable of ecstasy and martyrdom.

GUEST

Then, Your Grace, let us rend the veil which divides consciences, a veil that is impalpable but deceptive, woven from words which sometimes disfigure reality, betray thought, and separate mankind into different bands, more because of simple verbal quibbles than antagonisms based on real error or hatred. One of the sacred writers has declared that the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life. To live in Him, let us make alive His message.

BISHOP

That is a work of the Church which many do not understand. It does not matter that heretical scholars, in order to proclaim external difficulties in the four texts, may have been able to prove that only Saint Mark records the words which Jesus used in the Syrian-Chaldaic language, and that Saint John does not mention, save in a single instance, the phrase "Son of man," which was taken from Daniel and is used more than fifty times in the synoptic Gospels, and that the word "Gospel" does not appear in Saint Mark, nor in Saint Matthew, nor in Saint Luke, or that it was Saint Paul who, in his Letters to the Romans and the Corinthians, used the word in the sense of "Good News," "Word of reconcilia-

tion," or "Doctrine of good-will in Christ." That which really matters is the doctrine of good-will in Christ. All the rest is merely to confound paleography with religion and philology with mysticism.

GUEST

I declare, Your Grace, that we are beginning to coincide in our views.

BISHOP

It will not be because I have made concessions that are forbidden me.

GUEST

I would gladly make concessions, if it meant that we might coincide on truth.

BISHOP

You can make concessions because you have only a vague idea of what truth is.

GUEST

I am searching for it, just as it is and wherever it may be found, as I have told Your Grace.

BISHOP

You look for it with the intelligence, and it is necessary also to search with the heart.

GUEST

I also search with my heart, but I know that without the help of the intelligence it is impossible to find it.

BISHOP

Reason is a fallible instrument.

GUEST

I know of no other, when it is a matter of reading and understanding a book.

BISHOP

Such was the beginning of doubts that gave birth to schisms, and of schisms that engendered wars.

GUEST

However, the Church was born in the midst of controversies and persecutions. Christ discussed with the doctors of the law, attempting to interpret the meaning of the Torah, and the apostles debated among themselves in regard to Christ; the doctors in the early Church debated about the gospel, and then the councils and the different schools sustained polemics in regard to the teachings of the early Church Fathers—and these discussions were not always carried on in a peaceful manner.

BISHOP

The Church has not been able to avoid the introduction of human errors and passions; more than once, reptiles that crawl on the earth have entered nests of birds that fly in the heavens.

GUEST

That is the sorrowful condition of human life.

BISHOP

But it ought not to be the condition of things that are divine. It is for that reason that our Church, with supreme wisdom, has avoided useless

disputes by fixing definitely the origin, the text, and the interpretation of the canonical Gospels.

GUEST

The decisions of the Church have not put an end to disputes. During the past century varying editions of the Gospels, commentaries, and polemics about them have notably increased. Ecclesiastical doctors have determined to adopt the arms of their secular adversaries and fight them on their own ground. Historical and philological criticism is today a bulwark behind which Catholicism defends itself.

BISHOP

It has always been so.

GUEST

Furthermore, in all my argument with you, I have tried to bolster up my position with ecclesiastical authority.

BISHOP

That is true, in appearance; but I do not know to what conclusions these premises lead.

GUEST

To prove that the unity of origin of the Gospels has not hindered the writing of a variety of "Memories" or "Testimonies," which differ among themselves according to the character of the authors and the circumstances under which they were written. As in the case of iconography, there are in those four "Memories" several distinct images of Jesus. In our former conversation I tried to reduce

the different bodily figures to one alone: that of the Man and his cross. In this one I would like to reduce the various spiritual figures to one alone: that of the Master and his doctrine. There is nothing heretical in my attitude, and I crave the help of your learning in the matter.

BISHOP

My learning is scant, but it occurs to me to say that if you find in Matthew the Redeemer of the biblical prophecies, and in Mark the One who performs wonders, and in Luke the Saviour of mankind, and in John the Son of God through the incarnation of the Word, you have in those four profiles the perfect silhouette of the Great Teacher for which you are looking. It is in this same manner that sculptural forms produce, by means of four perspectives, the impression of a solid body which art endeavors to present to the eye of the beholder.

GUEST

In sculpture there is a physical impossibility of securing that impression in any other way, since the eye of man sees only the apparent surfaces of the body, and within the field of a limited perspective. The imagination is obliged to sum up the partial data of the sensations.

BISHOP

Perhaps there was an analogous psychological impossibility that a single narrative should give the complete vision of our Lord, whose personality is so complex in its mystery.

GUEST

According to that, the testimony of each evangelist is insufficient, and the complete figure of the Master can be created only by the soul of each reader. The inclosed field of the Scriptures, of which you were speaking at the beginning of this talk, is being broken into, here and there, due to different testimonies. Through those doors, the subjective and dynamic spirit of individual interpretation which it is impossible to suppress, enters in.

BISHOP

That which you present as a new idea is nothing more than the recasting of the four Gospels in one, perhaps for the purpose of writing a new life of Jesus.

GUEST

I understand that. I propose something quite different.

BISHOP

The "Life of Jesus," taken from the Gospels, has long been current in church schools, as part of the catechism.

GUEST

I am proposing something less childish.

BISHOP

Other "Lives of Jesus" are also known; but such books, in general, are merely literary rhapsodies written to satisfy the vanity of their authors, or base diatribes of the Saviour, such as some of those you have just cited.

GUEST

No, Your Grace; I am not proposing a new history, with its chronology and anecdotes, but something more synthetic and more profound. I well know how much has been written about Jesus. The titles of a number of books, especially in modern France, are sufficient to define that bibliography: *La Scandale de Jésus,* by Allo; *La Folie de Jésus,* by Binet-Sanglé; *L'Enigme de Jésus,* by Daniel Massé. . . . But why continue?

BISHOP

I declare that I still fail to understand you.

GUEST

To understand me, it will be better to forget the Jesus of Strauss, that has an odor of sulphur, and the Jesus of Seché, that has the aroma of incense, and the Jésus of Renan, that mingles the odor of sulphur with the aroma of incense.

BISHOP

Do you want a religious commentary on the Gospels that will explain their moral teaching, with suggestions as to the present troubled situation?

GUEST

Such was the work of Lamennais, in its time, and in our time the work of Barbusse; but I am not proposing such a work, since we already have it.

BISHOP

Then, do you want a work like that of Papini?

GUEST

That is merely a rhetorical paraphrase of anecdotal Christianity, and is not what I want.

BISHOP

What book, then, do you want?

GUEST

I do not want a new book, of that or any other kind. As books, the Gospels, with their irreplaceable text, are sufficient for me. I do not want a work of words but a work of feeling. I refer to our own life rather than to the life of Jesus.

BISHOP

Now I understand you still less.

GUEST

Just as when speaking of Christian iconography, I reduced the various images to a single symbol in the Cross of the Man, beginning with crude representations and finally coming up to the invisible Christ, so now, in speaking of the Gospels, I wish to reduce the different testimonies of his life to a single symbol in the Word of the Great Teacher, and, beginning with his teachings, ascend to the invisible Christ, holding him subjectively in my conscience.

BISHOP

Do you refer to the parables?

GUEST

To the parables, for the present, and also to the

phrases, discourses, prayers, intimate conversations —all that the Master said—because his words are the light of the soul; although it might be sustained that Christ spoke only in parables, that is to say, in a metaphorical form, but of an incalculable spiritual dynamism.

BISHOP

There is no doubt that the parable is the expression of the highest and most genuine Christian eloquence.

GUEST

Figurative preaching, which is perhaps of Oriental origin, was brought by Jesus to its highest artistic perfection.

BISHOP

Jesus was the creator of this kind of preaching.

GUEST

If he was not its creator, at least his parables have all the clarity of his own spirit, which is like fresh water in its very sources. He makes no use of complicated allegories, as do other literatures and religions. The parables of Christ are simple, open to every one, self-explanatory, and before he has scarcely finished the presentation of a story or description, its moral teaching shines forth with all the charm of true poetry.

BISHOP

I am of your opinion.

GUEST

I have experienced the same feeling on reading

the parable of the good Samaritan, that of the prodigal son, that of the ungrateful servant, that of the wise virgins, that of the grain of mustard—all of them, in a word.

BISHOP

Do not forget the parable of the sower, which is the most opportune, in this case: "A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold." Having said this, the Lord exclaimed: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The disciples asked him in regard to the meaning of this parable, and he replied that it referred to those who hear his word and forget it; to those who hear it and wrongly interpret it; and to those who, hearing it with a good heart, make use of it in their lives.

GUEST

This parable of the sower might well be called the Parable of Parables.

BISHOP

Why?

GUEST

Because it applies to all.

BISHOP

And to all who hear it. . . .

GUEST

To all, Your Grace; even to his immediate disciples, to whom he was speaking, since from the Gospels we learn that not all those who joined themselves to him in a physical sense understood his preaching or took advantage of his spiritual sowing. The four Gospels make evident the greatness of Jesus and the smallness of many of those who followed him.

BISHOP

The Master was humble and his disciples were holy.

GUEST

Not always, Your Grace.

BISHOP

Always!

GUEST

Paradoxically humble is He who washed the feet of his disciples and who, at the same time, considered himself King, Son of God, come down to save the world.

BISHOP

For that reason, his humility is all the more admirable.

GUEST

His humility is also paradoxical, since he cursed the Pharisees and lashed the dealers, driving them from the Temple.

BISHOP

On these occasions he did not proceed as a man

carried away by his wrath, but as God in the execution of his justice.

GUEST

Publicans, Sadducees, Pharisees, judges, magistrates, the rich, all fall under his lash. If he attracts anyone, it is because he forgives such a one his faults: the prostitutes, the avaricious, the cowardly, the ignorant, the poor. Some of his disciples, even, do not escape his scorn.

BISHOP

Some of the twelve?

GUEST

He scorns Judas as a traitor; Peter as timorous; Thomas as incredulous. He described each of them, in some unforgettable anecdote, in a way that has marked him forever.

BISHOP

You read into his phrases a significance which they do not have. This is like the seed that fell among thorns. They were men, and as such they made mistakes. It was written in his Messianic destiny that he should thus mortify all his own feelings, in order to increase the anguish of his life.

GUEST

It is for that reason that the drama of the Gospels is so impassioned. Among men of common stock the figure of Jesus stands out like that of no other being ever seen on earth. His word contains, like a mysterious seed, all the force of its origin.

For that reason I would like to isolate his message, now that we have the testimony of that which the Master really said, so that the good seed of the sower be not lost among the thorns of historical or theological controversy. With the four Gospels reduced to a single biographical argument; with the elements which come directly from Jewish prophecy by way of Matthew, from Greek metaphysics by way of John, and from Roman politics by way of Mark and Luke, all sifted out and separated the one from the other, we could then compare the different testimonies as to what the Master really said when he prayed, when casting out demons, and when healing, thus reducing Christian truth to the text of the Good Message in its purest expression.

BISHOP

There is nothing in all that which is opposed to the traditions of the Church, to the discipline of dogma, nor the inspiration of faith.

GUEST

The appearance of Christ on earth justifies the creation of a new era in human history, because he realized, by means of his word, an essential transmutation in the religious conscience of man. Before Christ, humanity conceived of God or gods under different figures, including the human figure; but these symbols of adoration have nothing in common with the mystery of the Invisible God, who was made flesh, nor with the fact that the Great Teacher taught divine possibilities, latent in the human con-

science. God, the Word, was made Man in order that man might understand God. The Gospel of John gives us the esoteric key of that mystery which the three synoptic Gospels present only in the external form of parables and stories, including the miracles, which are also parables.

BISHOP

The miracles parables?

GUEST

Parables in action, as I am to prove to you.

BISHOP

God, without doubt, is the Word, and the Word was made flesh in order that man might hear, articulate, the word of God.

GUEST

With the four Gospels fused into a single argument, I distinguish in it three spiritual zones or spheres: the first, metaphysical, is prophetic tradition; the second, realist, is historical tradition; and the third, philosophical, is Christian teaching. The first zone corresponds to the Father, who is the Creator in his infinite power: Time, the second, to the Son, who is creation in its highest aspect: Man, the third, to the Spirit, of whom we have a glimpse in human reason, capable of knowledge and divine perfection. Jesus, Master of Men, realizes that mystery and illuminates it with his word, as one lights a path with a lamp, the path of moral perfection.

BISHOP

I find nothing objectionable in what you have just said.

GUEST

The word of the Father was the message of the Son and is the key of the Spirit. For that reason I do not ask for a literary biography, since we have already a number of them, nor a learned commentary, since we have them also in sufficient number; but something more subjective in each one of us; the communion of the soul with the doctrine of the Master, so that we may hear the Invisible Christ speaking to the inmost conscience.

BISHOP

The word of Christ is in the Gospels.

GUEST

I hold to them, and from them alone must be born the inspiration necessary to restore the kingdom of the Spirit which threatens to fall, under the attacks of a false paganism and a new barbarism.

BISHOP

No correct interpretation of the word of Christ can be made, if his life and divine origin are left out of account.

GUEST

From his word, which we have with us, since we may still learn it from the Gospels, we could lift ourselves up to the life of the Master and from this point to the divine character of his mission.

BISHOP

I would prefer to come from God to the Master, and thence to his message.

GUEST

Such a difference of opinion is easily explainable: you have been educated in the deductive method; I practice, on the other hand, the inductive, or both of them at the same time, when I am happy enough to arrive at a timely intuition. In this case it seems to me that it is more profitable and more certain to go from the known to the unknown, from the individual to the universal. Still, I would not wish us to enter suddenly into the most obscure region of the sacred books, in which divine causes hold sway.

BISHOP

The region of mysteries cannot be obscure, save for souls that are without faith.

GUEST

Every book that serves to found a religion is obscure. The book of Genesis, the Vedas, the Koran, are all obscure. And it is because of that obscurity that we have such diverse theological doctrines and inevitable schisms. It is also from such obscurity that the suggestions of mysticism are derived.

BISHOP

Without reverence, you mix false books with the true and confuse emblems and nonsensical symbols with the mysteries of Christian faith. Nothing is less similar to the cosmogonies of the East than

the Gospels. The Gospels treat only of the life of Jesus, with all the simplicity of apostolic witness to the life of a man.

GUEST

The life of a man is as mysterious as the life of a world. The mystery becomes more impenetrable if the man is a God. Such is the situation of Christ in the four Gospels.

BISHOP

If they seem to you obscure, it is because you are possessed by the demon of negation.

GUEST

You might exorcise me.

BISHOP

No, because you do not believe in exorcisms.

GUEST

I believe in those of the word, as when Christ exorcised those men of Gadara who were possessed of evil spirits.

BISHOP

The word was the means used, but the power of the word came from God, or from the faith of man in God. It is possible that some time Divine Goodness may illumine your soul with his presence. I am sorry to see that for the present, you prefer to continue possessed by the evil spirit of your diabolical cleverness.

GUEST

All that I propose in the interests of simple didac-

tic clarity is to separate the metaphysical, and even the historical elements, in order to give all our attention to the word, which is the most authentic, the purest, and the most actual touch we have with him.

BISHOP

Jesus would lose the divine secret in which his work was founded, if he were stripped of his marvelous character.

GUEST

I do not intend to deprive him of that: the word is the Word and the Word is God. There is nothing so marvelous.

BISHOP

Because of his sublime origin his voice still resounds throughout the world.

GUEST

You are right, Your Grace, and I am only attempting to speak first of the message in order to go on and speak of the messenger and of Him who sent him.

BISHOP

Without that mystery one cannot feel God incarnated in man for love of men, nor man ascended to God by the virtue of love.

GUEST

As a duality formed of flesh and spirit, clay and air, earth and heaven, beast and angel, instinct and ideal, I also have that feeling within myself, and be-

cause of it, I think that I understand the mystery of which you speak. However, when I thus conceive of the Saviour, it seems that he withdraws from me, that he loses his earthly condition, that he fades away like an unattainable vision among the highest clouds. I prefer to have him more human, almost like ourselves, as when he walked among his disciples, whom the Master called "friends."

BISHOP

He performed his miracles in the midst of his disciples, and these miracles constitute the other marvelous element of his life.

GUEST

He performed miracles in order to convince the unbelieving, since he could not have convinced them with syllogisms.

BISHOP

He did not convince them, even by means of miracles.

GUEST

If all had believed in him, the fanatics of the old law might not have crucified him. If no one had believed in him, it would not have been necessary to crucify him. Likewise, do not forget that, according to the Gospel, Christ accepted with reluctance the part of a miracle-worker, and that he generally performed his miracles at the request of others, of persons who were selfish or common, requesting that they keep secret the marvels which he did.

BISHOP

He also performed miracles to cure the sick, although it is true that sometimes he did so with evident reluctance.

GUEST

Jesus preferred those believers who followed him, like Jairus and Martha, attracted by the internal evidence of faith itself. The miracles may have had influence on those who saw them, but not on us, twenty centuries later. The unbeliever of our day doubts them, but just as the unbeliever of Jerusalem attributed them to an evil spirit.

BISHOP

Some said, "He is a prophet!"

GUEST

The rest said, "He is possessed with a devil!"

BISHOP

Materialistic learning of our day pretends to explain the miracles as cases of suggestion, and the possibilities of necromancy or fakirism have also been proposed. Unbelief, as you see, has no limits.

GUEST

It is, in that respect, like superstition.

BISHOP

However, almost all the miracles of Jesus were healings, acts of charity.

GUEST

Whatever the purpose may have been, the mir-

acles are not that which most deeply interests me in the life of Jesus, unless we are to consider them acts of a higher form of teaching. Moses and Joshua also performed acts which were contrary to the regular order of nature, without pretending to be gods, although, according to the Scriptures, they were also sons of God. To make water spring from a dry rock is as extraordinary as it is to multiply the number of fishes: to divide the waters of the sea in order that an army may pass over on dry land is as extraordinary as it is to walk on the waves; to stop the sun in its path is as extraordinary as it is to make a dumb man speak; to throw down the walls of a city, to the sound of sacred trumpets, is as extraordinary as it is to send evil spirits into a herd of swine.

BISHOP

It is always God the Father who does the miracles. He does them through his chosen servants or those who have merited his favor. The wonders which God did through Moses, the prophets or the patriarchs do not invalidate those which he realized through the Messiah.

GUEST

I do not pretend to invalidate them; but in themselves they are not sufficient testimony that he was the Son of God. Saints who came after Christ, like Francisco Solano and Luis de Bolaños, in America, also performed wonders which are well authenticated. Man is charged with tremendous forces, and a high spiritual development is sufficient

to waken those latent forces in a body which has been refined by acts of penance and by fasting. If we believe in Christ, we do not need his miracles, as he himself declared; if we do not believe in him, we will doubt the testimony of the apostles or we will attribute all that to some form of fraud. On the other hand, I understand that the miracles were parables in action, and that the entire life of the Great Teacher was an overwhelming miraculous parable written on the earth with his blood. The Master sums up Jesus in whom he speaks and Christ by whom he speaks: God who inspires him and Man who came to teach men. The word of Jesus is the pledge which Christ left us. The Gospels are holy because they have conserved the good message. The word of Christ is the greatest miracle of Jesus, and that miracle still endures.

BISHOP

The same supernatural power which made possible the mystery of such a life is that which made his doctrine fruitful.

GUEST

His incarnation and his miracles are things of the past; his words still endure.

BISHOP

They endure, because it was he who spoke them.

GUEST

The prophecies which foretold his mission, the mystery of his birth and the stories of his mar-

velous life, may bring a sneer to the face of the skeptic; but there is one undeniable fact which is the posthumous miracle of the word of Christ, undeniable because of the number of souls which it has cleansed, consoled, and made holy, in every part of the world. In spite of a stubborn Judaism and a primitive fetishism, in spite of an obstinate paganism and a persecuting Empire, in spite of materialistic science and skeptical philosophy, all of which were hostile. His voice to-day resounds throughout humanity. The sensibility of the world is to-day Christian because of his message.

BISHOP

He is, in truth, the world's Great Teacher.

GUEST

Let us strip him for a moment of all Messianic, prophetic, and biblical elements, that shroud the person of the attractive Nazarene, making him a miracle-worker; let us take him down from the cross on which hangs his body so dreadfully gory, and let us lower him from the throne at the right hand of Jehovah, where he went, after the resurrection, to take his seat, as Intercessor. Let us dissipate from around his gentle figure all the apocalyptic mists of legend, and, thus restored to the fullness of his human form, let us hear him speak, as the multitudes heard him speak on the shores of the Galilæan lake, or as the Samaritan woman heard him speak as they sat together on the curb-stone of the well, while the twilight dropped gently down upon the surrounding fields. . . .

BISHOP

Oh! that it were possible thus to hear him!

GUEST

It is possible for us thus to hear him. The gospel has preserved his eternal words. It would be sufficient to recall them. The Gospel of Luke relates that in the synagogue in Nazareth, hearing Christ speak, the people "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth," and that in Capernaum his hearers were "astonished at his doctrine; for his word was with power." These expressions of Luke describe the eloquence of the Master, which charmed and subjugated his hearers.

BISHOP

The other Gospels confirm the declaration of Saint Luke; the proof of the fact is the multitudes which followed him in his pilgrimages and the fascination which his word still exercises over us.

GUEST

I infer that the power and grace to which Saint Luke alludes may have been derived from his physical gifts and his Messianic conviction. The Galilæan, as an orator, must have had the expressive eyes, the melodious voice, the mysterious, magnetic influence of all great leaders; but, at the same time, one must take into account, as an element that favored his message, the popular sympathy which was felt for that wandering youth, who spoke of his mission with an absolute certainty. Mark puts this

phrase in the mouth of Jesus: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

BISHOP

The mystery of the incarnate Word which inspires the Gospel of Saint John, makes manifest, better than the other parts of the New Testament, the powerful eloquence of our Lord. His personal charm and the romantic prestige of his life, may have exercised influence over the multitude in so far as the Master was also a man; but the hidden secret of his power resides in the divine Lord of whom he was the messenger.

GUEST

Even if he had not been the Messiah, his own conviction that he was, which carried him to his death, would have been sufficient to convince his hearers. Humanity responds to sincere, generous and tragic apostleships. Lay history abounds in analogous examples.

BISHOP

In Jesus Christ there is something more.

GUEST

I do not deny it, but I have said that just now we are considering the Master within human measure. Afterward we shall consider him as God.

BISHOP

He is the unsurpassed and unsurpassable Lord.

GUEST

Neither do I deny that, and what you say is

shown in the Gospel text and proved by Christian history.

BISHOP

John relates that when the Pharisees sent officers to arrest Jesus, on their return they said: "Never man spake like this man." And the Pharisees exclaimed: "Are ye also deceived?" The Pharisees looked on him as a deceiver. Do not do as they did.

GUEST

How could I do so! Do you not see that, in view of the purity of his life, the transcendent character of his doctrine, the power of his eloquence, I place the Master above all masters? If, for me, there is anything extraordinary and admirable in the human personality of Christ, it is the mysterious power of his word.

BISHOP

He said: "My doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me;" "Blessed is he who hears the word of God and does it;" "He that believeth in the Son of God, hath eternal life;" "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." These sentences explain what you call the mysterious power of his word.

GUEST

His word must be interpreted, in order that it may create spiritual life in each soul.

BISHOP

It will be well to do this, if you do it with humility, as he taught us.

GUEST

"Humility" is a word that needs explanation, when it refers to Christ. For the present, let me say it is a word sometimes interpolated in the translations of the Gospel, as Father Amat notes in his edition of the Catholic Bible. Thus, in nothing less than the Beatitudes it has been interpolated. . . .

BISHOP

In the Beatitudes, so soon?

GUEST

In Chapter V of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, we read: "Blessed are the meek and the humble, for they shall inherit the earth." The words "and the humble," are an interpolation which the Church admits, as I have already said.

BISHOP

And what do you prove by that?

GUEST

That the Master did not always use that word, and when he used it, it is not to be taken as meaning physical and spiritual lowliness, as some Christians have understood it. The anchorites in their life and the "Instructions" of one of their number, like Saint Anthony, have mutilated his doctrine. Humility, on the one hand, does not mean humiliation. *Humilis* in Latin means "humble," and, as Your Grace knows, is equivalent to low and vile, modest and poor, submissive and patient. The different shades of meaning are important. A man

may be modest and not poor; he may be patient and not vile. In his deeds and words Jesus was a humble man before God, but he was also completely the contrary before men.

BISHOP

Curious exegesis!

GUEST

Although this may irritate Your Grace, I believe that, according to the gospel, Christ preaches grace of body as well as of conscience. He allows himself to be anointed with oils and perfumes, he attends banquets and social gatherings, and his entire personality is presented to us full of æsthetic grace and moral pride, which, certainly, are not attributes of a despicable person. It was not without cause that he fascinated so many women. . . .

BISHOP

Be careful, my friend!

GUEST

Do not hear me with malice, for I do not speak maliciously.

BISHOP

Not satisfied with converting that meek lamb into a lion, you now transform him into the serpent of the temptation.

GUEST

Far from it, Your Grace. I insist that I speak without malice. Even more, I declare that I speak with the greatest reverence. I do not wish to see

in Christ a lamb, a lion, or a serpent. We agreed to find in him a man, to listen to a Master. Speaking in this way, I do not mean to suggest any thought of frivolity. Magdalene, the Samaritan woman, and Veronica must all have felt the personal charm of Jesus, just as the little children who came to him must have felt it, for children, as a rule, do not come to men who are unkempt, ill-favored, or ill-tempered. The pity which the suffering of Jesus inspired in them during his last days was born of the admiration which they had felt for him in other and better days.

BISHOP

At this rate, to show off your own originality, you will finally deny that there is any sense in the Sermon on the Mount.

GUEST

Believe me that I proceed loyally and with all humility.

BISHOP

It will be necessary to give a better proof of it. . . .

GUEST

In the discourse on the Beatitudes Jesus offered happiness to the meek, to lovers of peace, and to the poor in spirit, and from this it has been deduced that, since he preached humility, he preached also the humiliation of man before men. I believe the contrary, even ignoring the fact that the words "meek," "peacemakers," and "poor in spirit," may

be a faithful translation of his thought. In any case, Thomas à Kempis, who knows something of the matter, says: "The poor in spirit are the most despicable of all creatures," and some French translations of the Sermon on the Mount do not say "poor of spirit," but *"pauvres en esprit,"* "poor in spirit," which is not the same. For that reason I interpret the words cited to mean "serene," "conciliatory," and "free from pride," since, to interpret them as a eulogy of cowardice and littleness of soul, is not in harmony with the rest of the sermon, nor with the arrogance of the Teacher, who, by his own hand, drove out the merchants who sold and bought in the Temple. The life of Jesus is an example of heroic energy and of thoughtful kindliness, in the proud consciousness of his own greatness. Such is the light in which I interpret those words, rectifying the meaning of the traditional or common translation.

BISHOP

And what about the other beatitudes?

GUEST

The other beatitudes which Christ gives in the Sermon on the Mount have a less ambiguous meaning.

BISHOP

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain

mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

GUEST

Such sentences form a chain of eloquent gradation: first, unavoidable suffering and the promise of comfort; afterward, human hostility and the promise of reparation; after that, help given to the neighbor and the promise of reciprocal help; further, purity of purpose and the promise of seeing God; finally, suffering in the struggle for justice, to receive the kingdom of heaven. Nothing in this signifies in the word of Christ resignation, renunciation, or spiritual poverty. The ideal proposed by the Beatitudes is not that which is realized by the beggar, the bigot, or the hermit. The Beatitudes propose an ideal which is to be realized in active life, in its human fullness, offering to those who suffer with serenity and struggle with hope, the help of the invisible forces in whose name the great Teacher spoke.

BISHOP

I repeat that you are a disconcerting man.

GUEST

Perhaps, but not arbitrary.

BISHOP

And what did Christ mean, when he counseled him who receives a blow on one cheek to turn the other?

GUEST

This phrase has been very much abused, its meaning twisted to the extent of making it degrading, to the delight of cowards. The phrase is a figurative form of counseling patience, which is spiritual fortitude and triumph over oneself. Otherwise, it would infer a counsel both inhuman and despicable. Christ preaches hope, not weakness; endurance, not cowardice.

BISHOP

If what you say were true, it would mean that all Christianity is founded on an error.

GUEST

It is less important that Christianity be mistaken than that Christ be mistaken.

BISHOP

You speak with such presumption that you will end by criticizing our Lord.

GUEST

Do not fear that.

BISHOP

How can I help it?

GUEST

I wish that you would censure less and answer more.

BISHOP

It is impossible to do so; you are a juggler of paradoxes.

GUEST

Do not forget that Saint Francis of Assisi called himself a *Juggler of God*—as you have almost called me. . . .

BISHOP

You have erudition to spare, but modesty and faith are lacking.

GUEST

You call my poor readings erudition, but you call understanding a text correctly a paradox.

BISHOP

A text, which everyone else has understood differently.

GUEST

Error, though a thousand years old, is none the less error.

BISHOP

I was right, a moment ago, when I counseled humility.

GUEST

But we have seen already that it was not humiliation that Jesus counseled. The Church itself has consecrated holy warriors, such as Saint George and Saint James. The angel of Paradise brandishes a sword, like the Christ of the *Apocalypse,* who is a militant God.

BISHOP

You are an expert reasoner, but rash. . . . It is pleasant to follow you, although one fears to reach where you are going. In religious matters

the rashness of cleverness generally leads to nonsense or to blasphemy.

GUEST

You do not judge me gently, and it is only due to the respect I owe you that I am willing to continue, and because of my conviction that I speak of Christ with knowledge and love. But, can I fail to affirm all I affirm of the Beatitudes, when the Master, according to Luke, said in other passages, "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" "I have not come to bring peace, but war;" "It is time now to sell your cloaks and buy swords;" and, "But I have a baptism of blood to be baptized with."

BISHOP

In such phrases the Lord was referring to his crucifixion and the coming struggles of the new faith.

GUEST

No doubt he referred to that; but He who said such things could have been only a strong man, born to be sacrificed, with a price set on his life, to give us an example of how to struggle against misfortune. Otherwise, his religion would not have triumphed.

BISHOP

I could answer you, but I prefer to remain silent.

GUEST

There have been those who tried to make, or

have made, Christ appear as an archetype of beggars, a kind of human outcast, a footstool for everyone, a compendium of miseries and a paradigm of humiliations. I protest against that, because it is not the truth taught by his life and words. False disciples have misrepresented him, and afterward enemies of Christianity, such as Nietzsche, have taken advantage of their teaching, to exalt a common paganism, setting up against Christ a barbarian Superman, without understanding that Christ is the true Superman.

BISHOP

I am surprised to see how, by taking advantage of unexpected bypaths, you return to the truth.

GUEST

Jesus Christ is the Superman, since God became human in his form, and from his body, the God who was in him has returned to life. Son of man, he surpassed himself in the Son of God.

BISHOP

He came for that purpose, to show us God in himself.

GUEST

He came for that purpose, and to show us the path of victory; to exalt, by means of the Word, which is the divine sign of man, that which is most human in man, the conscience; to raise up the Elohim which lies buried in the clay of Genesis; to

efface the frontiers of death, liberating, by love and hope, new possibilities of life.

BISHOP

When you speak like that, one cannot doubt your Christian sentiments; but I do not understand how the lily of true faith can bloom among the thorns of so much heresy. . . .

GUEST

There are many paths that lead to the Master, and I am merely trying to remove the obstacles from my own. For that reason I reject the vision of the deplorable Christ of cowards and beggars. For, together with the doctrine of humiliation, which I have already rectified, there has been attributed to him the condemnation of worldly possessions, and that is also an error.

BISHOP

We have a new paradox!

GUEST

The words of Jesus in regard to worldly riches have also been twisted out of their original meaning by his commentators.

BISHOP

On what do you base that statement?

GUEST

The text of the gospel.

BISHOP

Let us see, let us see.

GUEST

An economic meaning has been injected into what Christ said about the rich and the poor, when it is evident that the Lord was speaking only in a spiritual sense. He does not postulate a political reform, of external and collective character, but a moral reform of a most intimate and personal character. In the story of the tribute that was to be paid to Cæsar, he defined two kingdoms—that of the state and that of the conscience, ignoring the former with a kind of disdainful irony.

BISHOP

Renan said of our Lord, "He is an anarchist, because he has no idea whatever of civil government." I am glad to see that you do not count yourself one of the followers of that enemy of religion.

GUEST

Many anarchists have thought that they could give their divergent, materialistic, and sterile individualism a better standing in society by invoking the name of the Nazarene; but that is also an error.

BISHOP

Notwithstanding, the discipline of poverty was practiced by early Christians and was continued by the monastic orders of the Middle Ages until it reached its splendor in Franciscanism.

GUEST

The Roman Church, on the other hand, as the definite organization of Christianity, has always sought alliance with the power and pomp of this world.

BISHOP

But the Church as a whole is based on a kind of communism which excludes the holding of individual property.

GUEST

Solitude, poverty, and renunciation may have been practiced by certain religious orders, but it is not the norm of political society, which was accepted by Christ. The anchorite of the desert, like Simon Stylites, or the hermits of the Spanish Renaissance, found that, far away from society, they could be on their guard against the world and expiate their sins. But in this attitude of fear or repentance they did not realize the ideal of militant virtue which was realized by Christ when he went to discuss with the doctors in the synagogue or to dine in the homes of the rich, mingling in this way with things of earth and thus suffering with a better understanding in the battle of his dreams.

BISHOP

He says that his kingdom is not of this world, and above all men he places the kingdom of heaven, the goal of life.

GUEST

But he does not condemn wealth; he simply sub-

ordinates it to higher things. Wealth placed at the service of charity is, for him, a proof of grace. Wealth used for egoistic ends is, in his sight, the greatest sin. And if he counsels his disciples not to be anxious about earthly possessions, it is because he promises them that, if they are consecrated to a virtuous life, all other things will be added unto them.

BISHOP

The twelfth chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Luke says, literally: "And seek not what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."

GUEST

The confusion in his teaching arises from other incidents and maxims. For example, Martha complained that Mary left her alone in caring for the household duties, and gave her time to adoration of the divine Guest. Jesus answered her: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." But he says this in order to distinguish between worldly life, which is transient, and spiritual life, which is eternal. The fragile character of economic anxiety, which is not based on religious conscience, is a persistent theme in his teaching, and if it is a question of a necessary choice of one of the two kinds of life, the earthly or the spiritual, he

prefers the latter, because he came just to teach its value.

BISHOP

Jesus said: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." How do you interpret this parable?

GUEST

As an exaltation of celestial grace, which is generous in its gifts, since from it come earthly splendors.

BISHOP

However, Jesus declared that it was more difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

GUEST

That is a phrase that has also been twisted out of its original meaning by traditional interpreters, since it does not condemn the rich, but reminds them of the danger that lies in giving all their time to the acquisition of riches, for egoistic ends.

BISHOP

Perhaps you are right.

GUEST

I am right, Your Grace; and, to prove it, let me recall the story of the rich young man, as it is given

by Saint Luke: "And a certain ruler asked him saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother. And he said: All these have I kept from my youth up. And Jesus said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. When the young man heard this he was very sad, for he was very rich. And Jesus commented: How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Thus the Master ratified the law of Moses and added the commandment of charity, based on disdain of material things. But this is completed by that other famous sentence of Jesus, "Let the dead bury their dead." The rich young ruler had notified him that before he could distribute his goods among the poor or follow him, he had to go home and bury his father, who had just died. It was then Jesus spoke that famous phrase, "Let the dead bury their dead." He saw the egoism of the rich man and considered him dead, since all who, in search of worldly pleasures, follow too closely after the things of this life and forget the other which is eternal, are dead to spiritual life.

BISHOP

Your observations make one think deeply.

GUEST

For the same purpose, Christ drove out from the Temple all those who bought and sold and had thus converted the house of prayer into a market place; he attacked the hypocritical Pharisees, who concealed their mercenary intentions under showy ceremonies. Extreme poverty, with its consequent sufferings, is as much an obstacle to spiritual life as is excessive wealth with its cupidity. The starving body and the pampered body equally conspire against the soul that becomes dormant, whether it be coddled by renunciation or by abundance. The Master always tries to define the spiritual life. He said to his disciples, "Ye shall all be sons of God." And to those who may have reached that state all other things shall be added. A society formed of human beings thus raised to new life, the life of the conscience, would indeed make a happy republic. Plato formulated for his Republic a series of external laws; Jesus made no law for the social order. If a new civil order should appear, it would be an outgrowth of the new spiritual order. The Master began by realizing his ideal in himself: from time to time he withdrew into the desert, to recover his own inner life, but he always returned to the world. He thus taught us to build, each within himself, the home of the soul. He did not make misery that is the humiliation of the body, nor humiliation that is the misery of the soul, the ideal of life. He taught that economics should be a science of means, not of the end. And from his miracles we gather the same teaching.

BISHOP

Let us see; for, although I do not approve of all you say, I am interested in hearing you.

GUEST

I notice a significant coincidence in the sick who were cured by Jesus: they were all either blind, paralyzed, or leprous. The symbolical meaning is evident, as though it were a question of parables in action. In the sufferings of the body he shows us the mysteries of the soul.

BISHOP

Explain yourself better.

GUEST

The blind whom he healed are those without faith; the paralytics, those without hope; and lepers are sinners. Due to faith, which is the light of the soul, he restored light to eyes that were blind; to rigid members of the body he gave movement of life; and to bodies that were blotched with disease he gave the purity of his virtue.

BISHOP

Your comments on these points are well taken; but you forget that Jesus also raised the dead and cast out devils.

GUEST

The doctrinal symbol in these cases is even more clear.

BISHOP

More clear?

GUEST

It is enough to say that those who were possessed of the devil are those who are under the power of an evil spirit, and that Christ himself had to die in order to regain life eternal in the resurrection.

BISHOP

I am glad to hear you talk like that.

GUEST

When he cast out devils, Jesus talked with the evil spirits of the demoniacal possession in a dramatic antagonism. This occurred with the evil spirit who said his name was "Legion," and also with those that left the caves of Gadara to enter into a herd of swine, throwing themselves then into the Sea of Galilee. Besides, after having cast out one of these evil spirits, as Matthew tells us in the seventeenth chapter of his Gospel, Jesus said, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." With this we enter the domain of natural magic, since it is a matter of the development of occult powers in man to work on the impure spirits of the flesh through the purification of matter. And let us not forget that Jesus fought face to face with the devil who offered him the kingdoms of the world, and that Jesus overcame him with the use of some magical conjuration. It was enough for him to say: "Get thee behind me, Satan," and with these words he overcame the devil.

BISHOP

These are things that have been studied in the

Demonialitatis, of Father Sinistrari, and in other ecclesiastical works.

GUEST

In regard to those who were raised from the dead, as in the day of the Final Judgment, the mystical significance is patent. Christ realized the same work in himself in order to complete, with his ressurection, the mystic trilogy which it forms with the incarnation and the Passion, which are celebrated in a text of the mass. Moreover, those whom he raised from the dead owed their resurrection either to a miracle of love, as did Lazarus, or of faith, as did the daughter of Jairus. It is not venturesome to believe that in raising the dead, in casting out evil spirits, and in healing diseases of the skin, whose blotches are easily visible, Jesus acted as a physician of the body, although in reality he proceeded as a physician of the soul. He took advantage of magic words and gestures, in virtue of his extraordinary power, but he did it only with those who had faith in him or for the edification of those who were present at such miracles. He was less moved by the wish to show himself capable of performing miracles than by his love to one of his own kind who was thus freed from his sufferings; and this, perhaps, was even less than the esoteric teaching of the spiritual mystery revealed by him in his own incarnation and in the suffering flesh of all men.

BISHOP

In other teachings, however, the Master seems to have followed a different procedure.

GUEST

Perhaps, when it was a matter of simple precepts or intellectual norms.

BISHOP

The Master said, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth; this defileth a man."

GUEST

This refers to the man as a visible being, which is not defiled with impure foods, from which the body can defend itself, but with impure thoughts, when they come forth from the mouth to be scattered through the world in the form of malevolent words, which are seeds of sin. Jesus himself explained this saying in this way.

BISHOP

It is Saint Matthew who gives us that phrase, followed by this other: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." With this, the Master wished to dry up the source of evil in the conscience, whose active agent is the power of speech, and a mystery of the flesh and the spirit together.

GUEST

For that reason the Master teaches that he who hates his brother or does him an injury should be condemned to death.

BISHOP

He goes even further when he says: "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." And also this: "And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." Because the defiling of the body comes from the conscience, or carries to it impure thoughts which defile the soul, creating motives for sin.

GUEST

For that reason I say that the most transcendental action of Christ in the destiny of humanity consists in his having given exact boundaries to the physical life, thus separating it from the spiritual life; the ego from the non ego, space from time, thus widening, fertilizing, and illuminating the field of the human conscience. It was not sufficient for genius of the race to have wakened the man in the animal by means of the reason; it was necessary to awaken the angel in the man by means of intuition. The Hebrews called Spirit-filled men "sons of God"; for that motive Jesus adopted that name. Religion, in general, is a biological force which transcends the spheres of the grossly organic to live on in the astral world of spirits.

BISHOP

Not all religions, since some of them have fo-

mented the impure and obscure sensual appetites. Phallic fetishism, bloody hecatombs, and magic Bacchanalia did not help the astral world of spirits, as you call it. On the contrary, the religion of those bestial and degrading ceremonies crushed the spirit down into the mire and clipped the wings of the angel.

GUEST

What you say is true, Your Grace. Paganism, even in its noblest forms, does not possess the sentiment of the inner life with such depth and clarity as does Christianity. If we consider Christianity as the true religion, it is because it set itself against all that is represented by other religions, in order to free the human soul, liberate the invisible man, and establish the kingdom of God on earth by means of the communion of all souls. In times of primitive paganism man is dominated by nature, whose forces are deified in the rude fetish with the totem or the phallus, or in the barbaric myths with Inti or Wôden. During the period of classic paganism man controlled nature and deified his own overpowering strength, as in Hercules or Prometheus. But it is only with Christ that the religion of the spiritual man appears and overcomes its own corporeal being. Greek philosophy anticipated something of this, as shown by the teachings of Plato, Pythagoras, and Plotinus; but the abstract thought of these teachings proved to be infertile as a religion. Christ by his personal example and spirit made of it a living reality.

BISHOP

If you really believe that, I cannot see why you torture your imagination with so much caviling about Christ and Christianity.

GUEST

Because I want to have the invisible Christ reborn in me, and in every one of us.

BISHOP

Only faith can give you that which you are searching for. The word of our Lord Jesus Christ is the revelation of a great mystery. Human intelligence folds its wearied wings when it tries to reach those heights.

GUEST

Without any doubt there is in Jesus Christ a mystery that moves and astonishes one.

BISHOP

If you accept the gospel, as you claim, you must believe it when it says that Jesus is called Christ because he is the Redeemer who was announced and whose coming was awaited. Christ is, necessarily, God made man.

GUEST

Or, rather, man made God.

BISHOP

It is not the same thing.

GUEST

I recall the passages of Scripture to which you refer. When he talked with the woman of Samaria, by the side of the well, he expressly declared it. The Samaritan had said to him: "I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ," and Jesus replied, "I that speak unto thee am he." But, Your Grace, I confess that I am intrigued by that frank declaration made to a woman whom he happened to meet in the way, since such frankness is in direct contrast with the great reticence the Master generally observed in regard to this matter.

BISHOP

His conduct, throughout the gospel, confirms that declaration.

GUEST

It may be that his conduct confirms it, but his words do not. I will cite, for example, that passage in the sixteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew: "Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." This proof is conclusive.

BISHOP

If Jesus had not told his disciples beforehand that he was the Christ, that pledge to secrecy would have been without reason. On the other hand, the time to say it publicly had not arrived, if it were necessary to say it at all.

GUEST

In speaking of this matter he almost always used

evasive terms. When talking to the Pharisees in the Temple, he said: "I have not come of myself, but from him who sent me." On another occasion he said: "The works which I do in the name of the Father give testimony of me." And another time he said: "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself, but as my Father taught me." On hearing these things, the people were confused. Some asked: "Is not this the son of the carpenter?" —since he made reference to his Father. And there were some who murmured, as Saint John tells us, saying: "He is mad!" "He hath a devil!" He also had this dialogue with the Pharisees: "Thou givest testimony of thyself; therefore thy testimony is not valid." To which Jesus replied, "Although I give testimony of myself, my testimony is worthy of credit, because I know from whence I came and whither I go, while ye know not from whence ye came nor whither ye go." All this is very different from his attitude toward the Samaritan woman, to whom he spoke so clearly and categorically.

BISHOP

When his hour had come and he was before his judges in the Prætorium, he spoke as you desire him to speak.

GUEST

John quotes only a few phrases in his description of the scene, phrases which are either ironically reticent or tragic.

BISHOP

When Pilate asked him: "Art thou the king of the Jews?" he replied, "Thou sayest it."

GUEST

That is ambiguous.

BISHOP

When Pilate told him that everyone was giving testimony against him, he remained silent.

GUEST

It was an impressive silence that moved the judges; the silence of the saint who resigns himself to die.

BISHOP

The President asked the multitude if they wished him to release unto them Barabbas, or Him who was called the Christ.

GUEST

That was on account of the people, since they called him Christ, Messiah, Son of David, King of Israel.

BISHOP

But the Master made known his mission to the disciples in the secrecy of their initiation, and to the Samaritan woman in that conversation which is like fresh water from the fountain. The Great Truth, in doctrine and in life, is cleared up by both passages. The divine nature of Jesus is the touchstone of our faith.

GUEST

It is also a stumbling-block.

BISHOP

How can you utter such a blasphemy?

GUEST

I have not blasphemed, Your Grace: I merely wish to point out that in prophetic Messianism we have the fundamental dissidence of Rome with Judaism and rationalism.

BISHOP

Let them arrange that!

GUEST

For a fanatical Hebrew, Jesus of Nazareth is not the Messiah of Israel, whom they are still expecting, and for a rationalistic atheist the Messiah implies a violation of natural laws.

BISHOP

Our faith is based on the Sacred Scriptures.

GUEST

Jewish obstinacy is also based on those same Scriptures; and on them a positivist-alienist has lately founded his thesis, diagnosing the Messiahship of Jesus, according to the Gospel texts, as a case of well-defined madness.

BISHOP

The coal of hell throws off those bright red

sparks, as the black tongue of Satan throws off blasphemies.

GUEST

The Gospels tell us that many of the contemporaries of Jesus considered him mad, and if to this we add his habit of wandering about the country, his hallucinations, his absorption in his own thoughts, the contrasts between his conduct in lonely places of the desert and in entertainments which he attended in the city, his accesses of anger, his transports of mysticism, his enigmatical phrases, his grandiose mission, and many other characteristics common to saintliness, genius, and madness, we shall have the facts on which this new theory of scientific irreligion is founded.

BISHOP

You see whither your reason, in which you trust, may lead you.

GUEST

It was not reason, but the faith of the Hebrews that crucified Jesus.

BISHOP

However, the prophet Isaiah had announced it all, in that passage of the fifty-third chapter, which is famous in the Church: "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;

and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to our own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, and he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." That is what the prophecy says. As you see, the Passion and death of Christ, his resurrection and the triumph of the Church are described in it with an astonishing precision of detail.

GUEST

Renan says that many apocryphal books were

added to the Bible, as the Church recognizes, and that this quotation from Isaiah is an interpolation.

BISHOP

The passage cited is authentic, I can assure you. Moreover, there are fifty passages in the Bible which announce the coming of the Messiah in a similar manner, although with less detail.

GUEST

From that fact there comes the suspicion that the posthumous figure of Jesus may have been modeled after what the prophets had announced, and what his early followers believed.

BISHOP

For what purpose?

GUEST

To prove that Jesus was the biblical Messiah.

BISHOP

As the Hebrews doubted, so do you also doubt.

GUEST

I do not refuse to believe.

BISHOP

But you do not believe, just as the paralytic does not refuse to walk; yet he does not walk, because he cannot do so. You, in the same way, are unable to believe, just as one lacks a member of the body or one of the senses. It is a misfortune, and a mistake to attempt to remedy your lack with reason.

GUEST

Then, what do I need to remedy my misfortune?

BISHOP

A great sorrow.

GUEST

I have suffered it.

BISHOP

A great love.

GUEST

I have known it.

BISHOP

You are incomprehensible.

GUEST

As all men are, Your Grace.

BISHOP

If you believe in God, the Father Omnipotent, why do you not believe that he could have inspired the prophets of Israel, and that he could have incarnated his Son in the womb of a Virgin, in order to intrust to him the task of redeeming the human race?

GUEST

Because all that presupposes that Israel is the chosen people of God, since their prophets announced that the Redeemer would be born of their blood, and that in return for that privilege, all the peoples of the earth would call them blessed; but history proves, on the contrary, that the coming of Christ was unfortunate for the destiny of Israel.

BISHOP

Isaiah, in chapter seven, says, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"—a name which means "God with us."

GUEST

The Christ of the gospel was not called Immanuel, but Jesus.

BISHOP

Jesus Christ fulfilled the prophecy of the biblical name, since God came with him to us.

GUEST

Still, the prophecies are not sufficient as an argument, since, in their name, the Jews continue to expect the Messiah. On the other hand, the Messiah of the Old Testament is the Christ of Israel, while the Christ of the New Testament is the Messiah of all humanity. Add to this the fact that, as we have already pointed out, for Saint Matthew he is the Messiah of the Hebrews, for Saint Mark and Saint Luke he is the Saviour of the world, and for Saint John he is God himself, the Incarnate Word. The difference in the testimony of the four Gospels, of which we were speaking, now appears in all its importance.

BISHOP

I think I have already told you that those four testimonies are reduced to a single truth.

GUEST

To a single mysterious truth, which may be understood only by faith; but the faith of the Jew is contrary to the faith of the Catholic. For that reason I stated a little while ago that I preferred not to enter into the obscure region of causes; and even when Jesus is considered a historical personage, we must remember that, according to Christian documents, the Nazarene was, for some of his contemporaries, King of the Jews, as is expressed by the letters I. N. R. I. on the cross, and for others a madman. The serious thing is that the Christian apologetic has encountered in our time a French alienist who, converting the supposed madness of Jesus into a scientific thesis, pretends to prove it with a great display of facts, doctrines, and references to the Gospels.

BISHOP

Who is that infernal man?

GUEST

Dr. Binet Sanglé.

BISHOP

And what is the title of his book.

GUEST

The Madness of Jesus.

BISHOP

That was the only insult that was lacking our Lord! They mocked him in the Prætorium, they crucified him on Calvary, and this desire to mock

and crucify him anew merely proves that the risen Christ still lives.

GUEST

Much has been written against Jesus, and much is still being written.

BISHOP

The blasphemy of that atheistic scholar, whose work I do not know nor wish to know, does not even have the merit of being original. Renan had already advanced that theory in his seductive, but depraved work, although in an affectedly careless manner and without indorsing it. But this atrocity is as old as Christianity itself, since Saint Mark, in chapter three of his Gospel, mentions it as the impression of the Jewish-Roman populace in the presence of the lofty bearing of Him whom many did not understand. Human history is full of such cases.

GUEST

Yes, as in the case of Columbus, whom his contemporaries considered mad.

BISHOP

And, if such a thing can occur in connection with individuals who are merely temperamental, we must not be surprised that it occurred in connection with the God-Man, the Man mysteriously divine. He himself once said: "A prophet hath no honor in his own country," and his countrymen, hearing him say things they could not understand, said, "He hath a devil." Hostility to him came, principally, from a lack of understanding.

GUEST

All you have just said is true; but the novelty in the book of Binet Sanglé lies in its "scientific" apparatus and in the multiplicity of texts which he quotes to prove that Jesus was a mere vagabond, with congenital weaknesses, who modeled his mystic hallucinations on the law and the prophets, to the extreme that he forced his own death in order that the prophecies might be fulfilled. Binet Sanglé, who is a professor of materialistic psychology, admits that Jesus knew how to read and write, that he had a remarkable memory, and was familiar with the sacred books of his country, but that he was ignorant in regard to the scientific knowledge possessed by civilized peoples of his time—such as Athens, Rome, and Alexandria. With an extensive physiological sphere of action, lacking intellectual control, and leading a life that was anti-hygienic and in the midst of a society that was much given to such illusions, he came to consider himself the Messiah, and, after a period of roaming about, his mental unbalance developed into megalomania, with accesses of furor, mystical hallucinations and incoherent discourses. It is possible that the prophecies of Isaiah may have been the germ of his hallucination. According to Binet Sanglé, Jesus, in Paris, in the nineteenth century, would have been locked up in a hospice, for reasons of public order; but, in the Judæa of Pontius Pilate, he founded a religion.

BISHOP

Do not go on!

GUEST

The French alienist adds to his argument several contemporary clinical cases, among which there is a majority of Jewish victims of alcohol, who suffer from a Messianic hallucination.

BISHOP

Do not go on!

GUEST

Pardon me, Your Grace, but I am merely repeating opinions of others, which does not mean that I accept them, and, believe me, I reject them as cordially as you do.

BISHOP

I am glad to know that you reject them.

GUEST

Excitable natures present certain characteristics that occupy a twilight zone between genius and madness, and some of these formed the basis of a superficial science which was in vogue thirty years ago. Max Nordau was the high priest of that materialistic band. He declared that the greatest geniuses of the past century were degenerates, just as Ribot diagnosed the hysteria of Santa Theresa, of whose work he had studied nothing and of whose soul he had no understanding.

BISHOP

Because of such thinkers, Léon Daudet has characterized the century in which they flourished as the stupid century. On the other hand, it would

be nothing against Jesus if it were proved that human nature had lost its equilibrium on receiving God himself in the flesh.

GUEST

God could have avoided that loss of equilibrium.

BISHOP

Just as he could have avoided the Passion and death of Jesus; but, in that case, the prophecies would not have been fulfilled, nor would Christianity have been born. That which was looked upon as madness was merely ecstasy, inspiration, a marvel. If all that gives him the appearance of madness, we cannot affirm that Jesus was mad.

GUEST

And even if he was, it would be because sometimes Providence puts more trust in the madness of man than in the reason of man.

BISHOP

But, my friend, we do not need to go to such extremes to discredit that satanic breed of anti-Christian writers, who, like his persecutors in the Prætorium, continue to scoff at Christ in his immortality. To discredit them, it is enough to recall the mystery of Jesus, who, being the Son of man, was also the Son of God.

GUEST

The last entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, on the day of the Passover, in the midst of the children

who waved palm branches and cried out, "Hosanna! Hosanna to the son of David!" while he passed by, seated on an ass, may have been a symbolic form of that mystery. Jesus, because he was a poet, liked figurative expressions, and his acts, as we have already pointed out, were parables in action. This entrance into Jerusalem, which seems like a grotesque idea of a madman, is also a parable; the Son of God enters the Holy City, riding on an ass, a divine being seated on a brute beast, and thus the children, the innocent souls of those who are to be "men" to-morrow, recognized him.

BISHOP

Parables in action. . . . Now I understand what you mean by that phrase.

GUEST

The words of Christ, full of sincerity, were like deeds; his deeds, full of intention, were like words.

BISHOP

Since you interpret so accurately the last entrance of the Lord into the Holy City, that signifies that you also recognize the Son of God in the rider seated on the lowly beast. . . .

GUEST

I do recognize him, and, like the children, I shout hosannas and wave palms as he rides by.

BISHOP

Then, for you too Jesus Christ is the Messiah?

GUEST

Yes, but not the Messiah of the fanatical Hebrews, because they did not recognize him: nor of fanatical Catholics, because they have appropriated him to themselves and deny him to the rest of humanity.

BISHOP

If Jesus Christ was not the Messiah of the Hebrews nor of the Catholics, I do not see how you define him, nor on what you can base such an extravagant conception, if you get away from the prophecies.

GUEST

Christ is the Sent from God, the Saviour of man. Christ is the Son of God, by incarnation in human substance, fecund and virgin. Christ is the Son of man, because the Angel has been reborn from man, kindling in sacrificed flesh the light of the Spirit, like the flame of the candle of an offering. The mystery of his divinity finds its unanswerable proofs to-day in the history of Christianity. For twenty centuries, Christ has been a God for all humanity, while other gods abandon the earth or limit themselves to the regions where they originated. During twenty centuries humanity has followed the universal and upward path that he pointed out. My reason is satisfied with this proof, and my faith awaits another more wonderful advance of the Spirit of Christ for the salvation of the human race. The mission of a Christ, the Saviour of men, as a Universal Messiah, is greater than that of the

biblical Messiah, and is destined to reconcile the various religions in the conscience of every man, by a mystery of love.

BISHOP

That conception implies a historical justification of our Church, and in that sense does not displease me; but I find it dangerous. . . .

GUEST

Every race, every century, every culture, as we are proving, has had its Christ, in both the physical and the moral sense. Thus every man conceives his own by psychological necessity. We might change the proverb to read, "Tell me your conception of Christ, and I will tell you who you are." The great number of his images arises from the same dynamic quality of the model. He is a child in Bethlehem, and an old man in his identity with the Father: he is a man on earth, and a God in the kingdom of heaven: he is a prototype of beauty and a spectacle of suffering, a Messiah and a madman. Christ came to supplant the errors of natural religion or of imperfect revelation, by the perfect Truth which was incarnated in him. After him, new religions or intolerant religions have no justification, because they are impious forms of human pride.

BISHOP

Are you a Protestant?

GUEST

I am not.

BISHOP

Sometimes you seem to be.

GUEST

Perhaps because I have read the Gospels, and take my stand on them to say that Christ is very careful about creating ecclesiastical disciplines and urging external compulsion. He trusts more to the conscience raised to the rank of an invisible master and guide of the carnal man, who is always claudicating. He taught his disciples but a single prayer and gave them but a single commandment.

BISHOP

A single prayer?

GUEST

His disciples asked him how they should pray to the Father when he had left the earth, and the Master replied: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." This is, at least, that which Luke relates. He sanctifies God, whom he invokes; he recognizes the power of Providence, from whom he asks bread for the body and pardon of sin, instituting, in this way, a direct relation between God and man, between the material and the spiritual.

BISHOP

And, did you also say that he gave his disciples but one commandment?

GUEST

He ratified the Decalogue of Moses, it is true; but all his teachings could be reduced to this commandment: "Love one another." Saint John, when he was ninety years of age, according to Saint Jerome, repeated even until the hour of his death that simple phrase, "Little children, love one another." And when the neophytes would ask him why he kept repeating it, he would reply, "Because this is the commandment of the Lord, and if that is done, it is sufficient."

BISHOP

Purity in thought and love in action, without a doubt, constitute Christian morality.

GUEST

The Christian ideal is that every man may police his own private life, and be the tribunal of his own conscience. In this fact we find the mysterious power of human uplift which Christianity brought into the world. Jesus set forth the doctrine that conduct depends on the conscience and that on the purification of the latter hangs all morality. Jesus, Teacher of souls, clearly defined the limits of the physical life, separating it from the spiritual; and he promised that the kingdom of heaven would come to us, if we knew how to realize it in our-

selves through love. It seems to be simply a form of egoism, to say that we should do unto others as we wish others to do unto us; but it is difficult to practice it. And Christ went beyond that formula, both in doctrine and in practice.

BISHOP

If you recall other phrases of his discourses which deal with that principle in greater detail, you will see that Christ said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Think a moment, and you will recognize that it requires a high standard of Christian living to avoid judging one's neighbor, and to pardon him. Although the motive may be egoistic, the ends sought are altruistic. The practice of this virtue would be sufficient to put an end to evil-speaking, which is the beginning of discord.

GUEST

What you say is true, and of course I recognize in Christ an admirable psychologist, since he bases morality, not on external pressure, but on internal discipline of sentiments and ideas.

BISHOP

Purity of intentions and control of one's language are the bases of the morality he taught.

GUEST

That in itself is extraordinary; but if I have considered the first declaration egoistic, it is to exalt the heroic altruism of his other counsels of love.

BISHOP

Christ says, "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?" From this springs the commandment to love our enemies.

GUEST

I was coming to that, to define that which is new and sublime in Christian love. The following counsels are also from a discourse of the Master: "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." And to this he adds: "Give to him that asketh thee; and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also." "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Such morality was never preached before he came. The Great Teacher who preached it gave it eternal life with the blood of his Passion and death.

BISHOP

Oh, how far from Christ are Confucius with his life, Socrates with his death, and Plato with his doctrine! One cannot understand how freethinkers are satisfied to consider a Teacher of such signal virtues as a mere philosopher. One who could live as he lived, one who could die as he died, could be nothing short of a divine Man—that is to say, a God, the only true God.

GUEST

There is no doubt that in Jesus Christ there is a mystery that moves and astonishes one. Socrates,

in spite of his death, and Plato, in spite of his doctrine, are mere dialecticians of morality. Confucius is nearer Christ, not because of his life, but in his teachings, since he founded a religion; but his is a religion without mystery, without dynamic power and universality.

BISHOP

Christ is God.

GUEST

The Master described the kingdom of heaven as something to be realized on earth, and as a state of grace in the soul. For twenty centuries humanity has gone on attaining to this realization, in the individual through spiritual progress, and in the race through political progress. The process is not completed, and the time of a new mystic hope for the world is approaching. Humanity goes on its way, heedless, like the unbelieving Cleophas on the road to Emmaus, in the gloaming, and it may be that the Risen One is coming under an invisible form to give a new message to souls.

BISHOP

The Gospel is his message.

GUEST

For that reason, I have sought, in the Holy Book, the authentic words of the Messenger. The secular and universal destiny of his word in itself alone reveals the divine origin of its teaching. If, in the first dialogue, Your Grace, we overcame the diffi-

culty of the changing vision of the images, it was to lead up to this second conversation in which, ascending to the Spirit, we may listen to his word. May his new message now be like a song in the night and all his doctrine a simple sentiment of Love.

III

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

The Master says, "I am the life. . . ."

III

THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

GUEST

I was looking out through the window-grating of my room this morning, and was interested in watching the workmen coming out of the oratory, with their wives and children.

BISHOP

They had come to the mass which I say for them on Sundays, and almost all of them communed to-day.

GUEST

If one may judge from their bronze-colored skins, they have Indian blood in their veins.

BISHOP

No doubt they have; and some of them still bear indigenous names, although they are descendants of autochthonous clans that were Christianized two centuries ago.

GUEST

As I saw them gather at the door of the oratory, dressed in their gaudy attire, and then slowly disappear along the paths that run through the valley, while the sun, the deity of their ancestors, was just coming up, I fell to thinking on a subject that I cannot keep to myself.

BISHOP

Tell me about it, with all frankness.

GUEST

To find in these mountains of America, so far from Jerusalem, and so far from Rome, a chapel with its cross, an altar with its mass, and a Bishop with his faithful followers, four centuries after Saint Francis Solano passed through this region, crossing seas and mountains to preach the gospel, is something that really impresses one as a miracle of the Holy Spirit, especially when we remember that we are living two thousand years after Christ, with the ocean between his land and ours, and with believers here whose ancestors were fetish worshipers in this far-off corner of the world.

BISHOP

I have often thought along the same line.

GUEST

But, at the same time, Your Grace, I have wondered if these poor, illiterate, alcoholic and superstitious half-breeds can really understand the God-Man, the Trinity, the Eucharist, and other mysteries of Christianity which theology has had great difficulty in defining.

BISHOP

I think they understand.

GUEST

In their own way?

BISHOP

Through the illumination of grace.

GUEST

That is a difficult question, and one well worthy of study. On the one hand we have the universal triumph of Christianity as a historical institution, and, on the other, the individual, with his gift of imitation in matters of external worship and with the enigma of his soul for the things of faith.

BISHOP

The Holy Spirit enlightens even these humble souls. Aside from that, faith is sufficient for salvation. This is the only proper doctrine.

GUEST

A faith which neither understands High Truth nor practices Love, in this world, is but a mutilation of Christianity.

BISHOP

The Catholic Ritual is a supernatural gift.

GUEST

For that reason, after having discussed the liturgical image of Jesus, who is the Man, and Christian teaching in regard to Christ, who is the Master of Man, I would now like to discuss the spiritual mission of the Messiah, considered as the Saviour of the entire human race, inasmuch as his influence has reached such remote regions of earth and humanity.

BISHOP

That spiritual mission was intrusted to our Holy Church when Jesus Christ, instituting its doctrines and its sacraments for the future, founded it with his first disciples.

GUEST

When we were discussing Christian iconography, the night before last, I was silently thinking of the numerous images of worship which colonial Catholicism left in America. The worship of images, so common in these countries, puts us, thanks to Spain, who was the mediator, in the same class with Italy and Greece, whose art was placed at the service of religion by the Catholic Church. Again, when we were discussing the Gospels, last night, I was silently thinking of the emptiness of our culture in this respect, since, in Spanish America, there are very few laymen who read the sacred books. Still fewer are they who speak of the Scriptures in public, or derive inspiration for their own civic conduct from Christian teachings. It is quite different in Saxon America, which is Protestant.

BISHOP

Under the common name of "Americans" the people of the New World cloak differences which affect the meaning of life and which may be based on a diverse interpretation of death.

GUEST

North Americans and South Americans equally consider themselves Christians.

BISHOP

But South Americans practice the true religion of Jesus Christ.

GUEST

In the United States, a country of Protestant origin and formed by cosmopolitan immigrations, with complete liberty of worship, under whose protection live thousands of Buddhists and millions of Jews; the land of skyscrapers, jazz and moving pictures; in the midst of a vertigo caused by the roar of machinery, the hum of business, and the chatter of emancipated women, Congress enacts laws on temperance, the people consider wealth a predestination of grace, and the rich destine millions to social service, while the laboring man works at a good wage during the week and reads the Gospels on Sunday.

BISHOP

Are you offering us the Yankees as a model?

GUEST

The material life of the United States appears to me absurd or incomprehensible; but as regards religious feeling, there occur there, as in all Saxon countries, things which among our people would be impossible or ridiculous, but which in that country counterbalance its material development.

BISHOP

It would have to be proved whether all that is so because they are Protestants or because they are Saxons.

GUEST

It may be that there is in every race a certain propensity for a determined form of worship. But education can form a religious conscience. In the United States, as in England, biblical tradition constitutes the basis of culture and morality. This is evident in the thought of their great men: such as Washington, the liberator; Emerson, the teacher; Lincoln, the democrat; Whitman, the poet; and Wilson, the leader. Wilson, before going into the World War, went to pray at the tomb of Washington, and when he went to Europe, he visited the Pope while the whole world looked on with deep interest.

BISHOP

I do not know what meaning their attitude might have, from the essentially Christian viewpoint.

GUEST

In Wilson, the Christian interpretation of life was very profound, and he himself has explained it in a little work entitled *When a Man Comes to Himself,* which is the gospel of a modern statesman. In that work he said:

"Christianity has liberated the world, not as a system of ethics, not as a philosophy of altruism, but by its revelation of the power of pure and unselfish love. Its vital principle is not its code, but its motive, Love, clear-sighted, loyal, personal, is its breath and immortality. Christ came, not to save himself assuredly, but to save the world. His motive, his example, are every man's key to his own

gifts and happiness. The ethical code he taught may no doubt be matched, here a piece and there a piece, out of other religions, other teachings and philosophies. Every thoughtful man born with a conscience must know a code of right and of pity to which he ought to conform; but without the motive of Christianity, without love, he may be the purest altruist and yet be as sad and as unsatisfied as Marcus Aurelius."

BISHOP

Does Wilson say that?

GUEST

Yes, Your Grace, that is what he says.

BISHOP

I confess that I am impressed by hearing such words.

GUEST

He goes on to say:

"Christianity gave us, in the fullness of time, the perfect image of right living, the secret of social and of individual well-being; for the two are not inseparable, and the man who receives and verifies that secret in his own living has discovered not only the best and only way to serve the world, but also the one happy way to satisfy himself. Then, indeed, has he come to himself. Henceforth, he knows what his powers mean, what spiritual air they breathe, what ardors of service clear them of lethargy, relieve them of all sense of effort, put them at their best. After this fretfulness passes

away, experience mellows and strengthens and makes more fit, and old age brings, not senility, not satiety, not regret, but higher hope and serene maturity."

BISHOP

These are beautiful words, and it may be that you have cited them to show the superiority of the Protestant over the Catholic spirit. . . .

GUEST

No, Your Grace: I have cited them merely to show that our leaders in South America are not accustomed to speak as did that citizen who, in his country, was first a university president and later President of the republic, although he spoke in that way. Here we hear no voices like his and the people live in a state of new paganism; alcohol and superstition rule the inhabitants of the interior of the country, and money-making and luxury dominate the people in the ports. Meanwhile, the churches of this other America are indifferent to the spiritual necessities of our time and people.

BISHOP

Nevertheless, machinery, wealth, and sensuality have impoverished the spiritual life of the United States, while Christian tradition is thoroughly alive in all Ibero-American countries.

GUEST

Without doubt, Catholic tradition, as an external form, is still alive; but this cannot be said of Christian sentiment, as an inspiration for life.

BISHOP

Christ still lives in the hearts of our race, and a glimpse of his image or the mention of his name is sufficient to evoke the religion of our ancestors.

GUEST

The religion of our ancestors was a religion of sacraments and symbols.

BISHOP

But through it all there throbs a spiritual truth, and because it is the only true religion it has endured through the centuries.

GUEST

The Catholic Church has endured because of its liturgic discipline and dogmatic intractability, and also because of those same characteristics, has rendered great service to civilization during past ages; but it is possible that our modern civilization demands a little more philosophic tolerance and a more adequate adaptation of its program to the concrete necessities of life.

BISHOP

The Church cannot compromise with heresy, without betraying its mission.

GUEST

Still, in spite of its hermetical discipline and apostolic mission, no one could deny that a great Christian movement has been realized outside of it.

BISHOP

Those who realize it are the strayed sheep, of which the Lord spoke.

GUEST

If the Good Shepherd is Christ, He will receive them to himself.

BISHOP

We only know that on leaving the world, after having revealed to us the true faith, Christ intrusted the custody of his flock to his Church.

GUEST

If the Church is the custodian of the flock, it cannot reject those who believe in Christ.

BISHOP

It can reject them, if they do not believe in the Church.

GUEST

It has power to do so, because there still remains in the Church a spirit of intolerance, perhaps necessary in other times, but now hurtful to the salvation of many souls. The mercy which it shows toward uncivilized believers might also be extended to unbelievers who are civilized. Man may be wise in a science of darkness.

BISHOP

If that were true, the Church would change its attitude. But the Holy Spirit is the mentor of the Church.

GUEST

I understand that the Church clings to its strict traditional principles to save itself as a historical institution; but it ought to save mankind also, although this may mean a change in its polity, as it has changed on other occasions.

BISHOP

There have been changes, but they were merely accidental, not essential. The schisms cleansed the Church of heresy. External modifications, including those made in the mass, did not affect dogma. And for this reason the Church of Christ considers itself unchanged through twenty centuries, both in the name of its founder and in its system of faith. This is what I mean when I say that Christian tradition endures among our people.

GUEST

Perhaps; but the fetishism of the common people and the pretense of piety on the part of the upper classes are not Christian. It is true that worship is practiced, but without understanding its significance. Charity among us is nothing more than an egoistic instinct or a worldly vanity. The reconciliation realized by Saint Augustine, between obedience to ecclesiastical discipline and the necessity of understanding God as the highest expression of truth, searching for him in one's own heart—*interiu intimo meo*—is something which in our country is neither practiced nor understood. If I should write a book for the purpose of setting forth

my anxiety about this problem of the soul, I would be looked on with suspicion or hostility.

BISHOP

That would depend on what you might say in the book. If it were written for the purpose of saying what we have so far said, there would be nothing scandalous in it. Some Argentine Catholics would consider your attitude with alarm, others benevolently.

GUEST

That is doubtful! Catholics would believe that I had turned Protestant, or would dub me atheist. As for freethinkers, who are even more superficial in their thinking, they would consider me a fanatic and would call me reactionary. In all Spanish America there is no serious study of these problems, no taste for them, no understanding of them. It is possible that in some countries, as in our own, for example, there has never been a real religious anxiety.

BISHOP

In our country, as in others of the continent, the ancient faith has suffered from the coming of international commerce and materialistic education. But the old ember still glows beneath the ashes.

GUEST

I do not know whether the fire on the hearth can be rekindled, but the ashes are without light and heat. Furthermore, I am not referring to the indifferent or lukewarm, but to ordinary believers and

the emancipated thinking classes, when I state that there has never been real uneasiness in Argentina in regard to the religious problem. This is serious for a young civilization, because metaphysical transcendence widens and deepens thought, without taking into account that this process might develop a moral content in politics. The words of Wilson, which I have cited, reveal those spiritual perspectives which are compatible with the culture and conduct of the modern man.

BISHOP

We have had religious unrest. The persecutions of the Church by Freemasonry, or during the period of our emancipation, the action taken by the Constituent Assembly in regard to the standing of the Church, and the lay reforms of a later epoch, are sufficient proof of this.

GUEST

Those anxieties were caused by philosophical, economic, or political struggles; but there was no real religious uneasiness, understanding by this term the inner aptitude of the soul to search after God and find him in the paths of meditation and love.

BISHOP

We have had mystical Christians. Saint Francis Solano, Fray Luis de Bolaños, and the mystic Alonzo de Barzana were all eminent in this respect, and in addition they had the multiple virtues of ecstasy, charity, and the performing of miracles.

GUEST

All those you name were Spaniards.

BISHOP

Santa Rosa of Lima and Sister Maria de la Paz, both of whom were true mystics, were born in America, and the spiritual work which they established is still in existence. Sister Maria, of Santiago, traveled on foot from her province to Buenos Aires, carrying a cross on her shoulder, to found a spiritual retreat after the Jesuits had been expelled. She did that which the Lord commands: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me." She followed him with her cross on her shoulder.

GUEST

The saint from Santiago carried a material cross; but Christ refers to the cross of life, which is our own body with its sorrows. In spite of that, what she did is really extraordinary, and I have written many enthusiastic pages in my book on Argentine culture to praise the lives of the saints of our colonial period. That was the golden age of Catholicism in America, above all what our historians call "the spiritual conquest."

BISHOP

It really was, and it reproduced the extraordinary happenings of the early days of Christianity in Europe; asceticism, contemplation, charity, martyrdom; the gift of tongues and all the gifts of grace

were manifested in holy men, who with their presence brightened the stage of life in new surroundings, in a doubly deep darkness of native forms of worship and military violence.

GUEST

There is no doubt that the spirit of Christ was present in all that, to create a new Christian continent; but that is all past, and in that epoch it was a matter of militant faith, helped on by exceptional gifts, and not of that which, in Saint Augustine, was the mental interiorization of Christianity, as a necessity of the conscience.

BISHOP

There were theological universities in America; and they had charge, in the name of Christ, of the training of young people who were natives of the country, and some of them, like that of Cordoba, were the creators of Argentine culture during the colonial epoch.

GUEST

Such things belong to the period of Spanish rule and to the action of the Church in society, when it held theocratic jurisdiction over the family, society, science, art, instruction, and even the administration of earthly justice. I do not refer to that. I refer to the individual soul.

BISHOP

We also had militant theologians in accord with the gospel, both in and out of the Church, and

there were not lacking those who defended holy doctrine in the tumult of revolutionary struggles.

GUEST

I suppose you refer to the Assembly of the year XIII, to the reforms instituted by Rivadavia, to liberty of worship, to the lay school, and to the civil marriage laws. . . .

BISHOP

Dean Funes, Castro Barros, Ignacio de Gorriti, in the first generation of our independence; Fray Mamerto Esquiú, Félix Frias, Facundo de Zuviria in the second generation; and José Manuel Estrada, Pedro Goyena, and Achával Rodriguez, in modern times, are all names of which Argentine Catholicism may be proud.

GUEST

I have extolled them in my books, and even others whom you omit, such as Father Lavaisse, who, when the question of liberty of worship was being discussed in the Assembly, defended the project, claiming that the country needed such legislation, since the Constitution created a system of cosmopolitan immigration. He thus clearly separated the kingdom of Cæsar from the kingdom of God, voting as a Deputy for the good of his country and as a priest reserving the right to preach his religion to those who might enter the country.

BISHOP

Father Lavaisse defended all that; still it is possible that liberty of worship was a mistake.

GUEST

Do not think so, Your Grace. Our country needed it. We had to choose between a country without population, and liberty of worship. The choice was never doubtful. The dream of the founders of the country has been realized, and we cannot help feeling proud to-day when we see Argentina converted into the native land of human brotherhood. In all this I find the influence of the spirit of Christ, the Teacher of brotherly love.

BISHOP

We sold our birthright for a mess of pottage.

GUEST

Like the United States, we represent a new experiment in the political history of the world. We are testing a new method of national fellowship, not founded on physical aspects of the race, but on the spiritual; not on bodily characteristics, but on characteristics of the soul, which is also a creation of the Christian type.

BISHOP

To that end, we needed unity of religion, as much as we needed unity of language and culture. We had it in our colonial Catholicism. Liberty has brought anarchy to the collective conscience of the country.

GUEST

It may be that we are destined to create a new religious unity through sublimation of foreign

methods of worship. I have attended services in the Catholic cathedral, the Protestant church, the Orthodox church, the Hebrew synagogue, and the Buddhist lodge, in Buenos Aires, and let me assure you that this variety of worship lends a certain greatness to our city. I consider that this liturgical diversity is a privilege, since in it I find Divine Unity. For that reason I am moved by the case of Lavaisse, although he and the others whom you have named were strong in their opposition to lay politics, and in their arguments invoked the Scriptures against their adversaries. I recognize the religious ardor of Castro Barros, the theological science of Gorriti, the mystic inspiration of Esquiú; but do not forget that the three were priests. Zuviria and Frias were Christian moralists of broad doctrines, but had no influence on the final results —just as Estrada was an eloquent preacher, but was overwhelmed by the lay reforms.

BISHOP

I suppose that you will not deduce from all this that secularism, or atheistic materialism, as you should rightly call it, is more powerful in our country than Christianity.

GUEST

I believe that both are equally superficial, with the exception of the powerful individualities which you have mentioned, and others that I might cite who fought on the other side, since I maintain that a calm Christian sentiment inspired the democratic

attitude of San Martin, Belgrano, and Mitre, leaders of the people, or the liberal doctrine of Echeverria, Sarmiento, and Gonzalez, educators of the people.

BISHOP

You incur in a contradiction.

GUEST

Not at all: I ignore the various political devices simply to emphasize the importance of lives. It would be easy to show that democracy, liberalism, and public instruction are remote consequences of the Christian spirit in modern society. Sarmiento was educated by Oro, a clergyman, in the reading of the Gospels, and wrote Christian catechisms for the children of the public schools.

BISHOP

Therefore the Spirit of Christ is that which triumphs.

GUEST

Liberalism and romanticism, which constitute the generous background of Argentine civil tradition, spring from Christianity as a sentiment. Those who have been estranged from Christ in our modern epoch belong to a certain group which read the scientific materialism of Comte, and another with atheistic and anti-clerical tendencies which read Renan; but both forgot that Comte founded the religion of humanity, including the saints in his worship, and that Renan, in his *Life of Jesus,* says: "No revolution shall hinder us from follow-

ing, in religious matters, the intellectual line, at whose front shines the name of Jesus, and, in this sense, we are Christians." All this is definite and proves what I told you: the superficiality of Argentine consciousness in all that refers to the religious problem.

BISHOP

In spite of it all, the Church which the evangelists of the sixteenth century founded here still subsists in its entirety, and we distrust all those who, in the name of Christ, have weakened Catholic sentiment, whether they were violent like Luther or skillful like Renan. For that reason Latin America remains Catholic.

GUEST

But the axis of European civilization, which was formerly Roman, Iberian, French—that is to say, Catholic and Latin—has been displaced toward Protestant Christians, with the capitalist industry of the Saxons, and toward Orthodox Christians, with the proletarian revolution of the Russians. That part of Europe which is non-Catholic now extends over Asia to the Orient, over America to the Occident, and over Africa to the far South. England and Russia are to-day the poles of modern Europe. At the same time, in the bosom of all societies, even of those which are considered Catholic, like France and the Spanish-American countries, secular influence is supreme in both government and education. The spread of Christianity in the eastern and southern countries, which, in the

sixteenth century, was in charge of Catholic missionaries, following in the track of Gama and Magellan, has come to be an activity of Protestant missionaries who scatter their Bibles in India, China, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. The English that is spoken in the British Empire is to-day the language of tourists in Africa, Asia, and Oceania. Rome cannot believe that she alone directs to-day the Christian policy of the world.

BISHOP

The dissenting sects are many, Catholicism is one; they are ephemeral, Catholicism is millennial and will be eternal.

GUEST

Catholicity means universality, and universality is to-day dissident, since there is a free Christianity.

BISHOP

Catholicism makes progress in the Protestant countries.

GUEST

It makes progress in the United States as another sect, or in Australia, where Bishop Leadbetter has founded a clandestine Catholic Church, which holds to the Roman ritual but practices it as an esoteric evocation whose magic force has been explained by Leadbetter himself in a most interesting and curious book.

BISHOP

The arbitrariness of heresy has no limit. Lutheranism suppressed our hierarchies and our ritual;

others, it seems, keep them in order to falsify them. All this will pass away, while the Church of Rome endures.

GUEST

Error, which is as old as man, has also endured.

BISHOP

Error is free, like natural intuition and rationalistic truth: it has no fixed forms; our Church has.

GUEST

For you, error organized in definite forms must mean other religions, among which there are some older than Catholicism.

BISHOP

Which?

GUEST

Those of India and China, for example. Buddha and Confucius lived before Christ. The religions that they founded also endure, and have a larger following than Catholicism.

BISHOP

Do you pretend to compare Buddha and Confucius with our Lord Jesus Christ?

GUEST

It is necessary to compare them, if only to point out wherein they differ.

BISHOP

Confucius was merely man, not God, and in his

religion you will find nothing more than a moral code for public officials.

GUEST

That is a great deal in the spiritual life of a nation. On the other hand, we cannot deny that Jesus Christ was also a moralist, a master of humanity, and in Confucius we find not a few maxims inspired by deep sentiment which remind us slightly of the teaching of the Nazarene. "The doctrine of the wise," says Confucius, "consists of virtue and goodness." One of his disciples once remarked in his presence, "That which I do not wish others to do to me, I do not do to them." And the Master commented: "That is perfection, to which I do not believe that you have as yet attained." On another day they asked him, "What is virtue?" And he replied: "To love mankind." "And what is wisdom?" He replied: "To know men as they really are." There are many such maxims of vigorous laconicism and living humaneness in the works of the Chinese master. Like the Nazarene, he also separates science from wisdom; temporal things from those that are spiritual; the soul from the body; and in his valuation of earthly things he places the example of love above all else.

BISHOP

However, as one rereads him, one finds in him now a philosopher, now a moralist something like Socrates; but in his bureaucratic life there is lack-

ing the awakening power of prophecy, and in his word the true inspiration of the Divine.

GUEST

That is true. Confucius talked about rules of conduct and practical virtues; but not of the spiritual nature of man, and but little of the Celestial Way, the Tien Tao, of the Chinese. One of his followers once questioned him in regard to spirits and death. Confucius replied: "If we cannot know life, how can we understand anything about death, and if we cannot serve men, how can we serve spirits?" Once, when grievously ill, with this same idea in his mind, he replied to one of his disciples who asked if it were necessary to say a prayer: "My life is all a prayer."

BISHOP

It is surprising that such a man was able to inspire his people with a moral sentiment which still persists in millions of human beings and after so many centuries, even from before our era.

GUEST

It may be that the religious mentality of each race is different, and that the Divinity sends to each the teachers that are necessary. The Chinese, the Hindus, and the Persians are, intellectually, widely separated from us. Jesus Christ is the nearest to Europeans and Americans, and the most easily understood, if he is freed from the Oriental fog that still enshrouds him.

BISHOP

It seems that you would like to make of Jesus Christ a kind of Western Confucius, as some Protestants and Theosophists try to do, robbing him of all that was most sublime in his divine mystery.

GUEST

I do not pretend to do that; but since mystery is the mark of divinity, I will remind you that if that legendary halo is lacking in the case of Confucius, the other Chinese teacher, Lao Tseu, has it.

BISHOP

I confess that I know very little about him.

GUEST

The historian, See-Ma-Tsien, tells, very briefly, the story of the life of Lao Tseu, according to Pierre Solet, through whose works I know it. Lao Tseu lived six hundred years before Christ, and was in charge of the archives during the dynasty of the Tcheoux. As such he read the old Chinese and Hindu literature. Recognizing the decline of the kingdom, he decided to abandon it in order to lead the simple life. On reaching the frontier he gave the border official his work on Tao, which means Life. Nothing more was known of him. Later on, there grew up legends, like those which enshroud the life of everyone who founds a religion: his birth was said to have been miraculous, his coming to earth was announced by a meteor, and when seventy years of age he disappeared toward the

West, seated on an ox which appeared to him after he had finished his book. But the whole tradition lacks proof.

BISHOP

In addition to lacking proof, it is puerile.

GUEST

Yet, without much effort, we could see in Lao Tseu a Chinese Christ. The old books of the kingdom, which he read, might well be the books of the Bible; the *Book of the Way* might well be the *Gospel;* the watchman on the frontier might be Saint Peter; the meteor which announced his birth might be the star of Bethlehem, and the ox on which he took his last ride might well be the ass of the Passover. . . .

BISHOP

Don't overwork imagination nor profane true religion.

GUEST

Chinese tradition has preserved the story of an interview between Lao Tseu and his contemporary Khong Tseu, whom we call Confucius. It is related that he said to Confucius: "The wise merchant hides his riches; the man who is wise in perfect virtue conceals his wisdom, even to the point of seeming to be stupid. Renounce your pride and your ambition; this is worth more to you." In this phrase I discover pietistic negation, Nirvanic annihilation, and the inhuman attitude of the Yogis and anchorites. Confucius told his disciples of this in-

terview and commented on it as follows: "Birds fly, fish swim, quadrupeds run. That which runs is caught with a trap; that which swims, with a hook; that which flies, with an arrow. But the dragon rises up to heaven on the wind and on the clouds, and no one knows how to catch him. Lao Tseu, as I have seen, is like the dragon." In these phrases Confucius reveals his astonishment at the mystic genius of his rival, but he pointed out, in that single expression of his judgment, the difference between them. Confucius is a man, a simple moralist; among Asiatics he is, perhaps, the one who most resembles Europeans. His life and work, nevertheless, lack that element of mystery, which, like Jesus, Lao Tseu presents in his life and work.

BISHOP

In what does the doctrine of Lao Tseu consist?

GUEST

The doctrine of Lao Tseu has some analogies to that of Christ, but they are more apparent than profound, more accidental than essential. *Taote-king,* which is the title of the book which contains his doctrine—and means "Book of the Way and of Virtue"—reminds one somewhat of Him who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." In some passage of his work the Chinese master gives this counsel: "Look on the small as great, and reward injuries with service." Such counsels, however, like others on charity, humility, tranquillity, resignation and love, are, in a word, different from

Christian counsels, in that the latter lead to the perfection of the individual soul according to the canon of divine purity, while the former lead to the abrogation of human personality, sinking it in the unity of Tao, the divinity without form and nameless. For that reason I recognize that the analogies between Lao Tseu and Jesus Christ are merely accidental, since they are found in a certain appearance of ethical norms, and not in the essentials of its metaphysical and theological foundations.

BISHOP

A similar difference separates Christianity from almost all Oriental religions.

GUEST

Nevertheless, these religions have been the spiritual bond of millions of human beings during twenty-five centuries. And the peoples who recognize this common tie are once more beginning to influence the destinies of the West.

BISHOP

Every one of those religions is a hotbed of sects.

GUEST

Christianity has also been such a hotbed.

BISHOP

Not one of them can be compared with the profound unity and the everlasting universality of Catholicism, which is the perfect form of Christianity.

GUEST

The Church of Moses presents those same characteristics; furthermore, it is older than the Church of Christ, and still endures.

BISHOP

The Church of Jerusalem was a national, not a universal, Church, and, as the prophets announced, became extinct, as regards its divine mission, when the Church of Rome was founded.

GUEST

But the temple, the sanhedrin and the synagogue still exist, with the Book and the Ark of the Covenant, and even now Mosaism is being reinstalled in Jerusalem, under the protectorate of a Europe which we call Christian.

BISHOP

Stratagems of British politics and international banking! Wiles of Protestants and Jews. All that has nothing to do with religion.

GUEST

Nevertheless, you will not deny that Mosaism survives in the bosom of all modern societies, and even within the Catholic Church, the heir of the Bible and its ritual. I have sometimes attended the synagogue in Buenos Aires and have recognized many forms of Roman worship on the altar where the rabbi was officiating.

BISHOP

The New Testament also quotes the prophets of

the Old, and that proves nothing against Christian truth; on the contrary, it confirms it as showing that it had been anticipated in the voice of the prophecies.

GUEST

Then you recognize that some portion of Catholic truth may be found in other religions which preceded Christ.

BISHOP

Perhaps the sentiment of divinity, which is common to all, and something more in the religion of Moses. . . .

GUEST

Something more? Much more! The Jews created the Messiahship. Christ and Messiah are names which express the same idea. It might be affirmed that Christianity existed before Christ, and that this Messianic sentiment of the race created in Jews like Saint Matthew, Saint Peter, both Johns, the Baptist and the evangelist, the certainty that Jesus was the Christ announced by the prophets. When one studies the ideology of the Nazarene, it is seen that it comes, almost in its entirety, from the Bible, from the name of God the Father, Jehovah, and of the first man, Adam, to the Decalogue of Moses, which Jesus ratifies, and the expressions "Son of God," "Holy Spirit," and "Kingdom of Heaven," which also derive from the Old Testament. The New Testament crowns the Messianic hope for the Hebrews who believed in him. Thus, the Messianism of Israel engenders Jesus

Christ as he engenders the Catholicism of Rome, making possible the continuance of both Churches, whose resemblance is revealed in the temple, in the Scriptures, in the priesthood, in the altar, and in the sacrifices.

BISHOP

There are essential differences between the two Churches.

GUEST

This Christ as conceived by the prophets is an outgrowth of the Jewish tradition, and this Christ as preached by the apostles is one of the complex political systems that bears his name.

BISHOP

You dialecticians of heresy are impracticable. Nothing is sometimes so irrational as a rationalist. You either say that which is entirely incomprehensible, or you voice a great truth.

GUEST

Do not lose patience, Your Grace.

BISHOP

Why should I not lose patience! If you look on Jesus as fulfilling the law and the prophets, as you say, it is proved by the Gospels that Jesus Christ is the Messiah; and if he is the Messiah, the complex political system which bears his name, as you call it, by itself alone proves the divine power which inspired the foundation of our Church.

GUEST

We are both right; I from the viewpoint of historical reasoning; you from the viewpoint of religious sentiment.

BISHOP

Truth is one and does not admit of those ambiguities of skepticism.

GUEST

I see that anger misleads you. I am not discussing Messianic truth, nor the divinity of your Church. I have mentioned them only to affirm that the Church of Rome is a continuation of the Church of Jerusalem. History teaches us this, and the Scriptures confirm history. Saint Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, gave special attention to the situation of the circumcised and the uncircumcised, thus contradicting Jewish prejudice in its self-glorification as a people especially chosen of the Lord. "Even the righteousness of God," he says, "which is by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference." And he adds: "Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also; seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." This is what Saint Paul teaches, and the Church agrees with his teaching. Fanatical Jews thought they owned Jehovah as against Jesus, he himself a Jew, just as fanatical Catholics believe

that they own Jesus, as against Israel, the cradle of Christianity.

BISHOP

Saint Paul refers only to the circumcised who are converted to faith in Jesus Christ.

GUEST

In the first century there was no distinction made in Rome between Jews and Christians. Tacitus confuses them, and calls the latter Jews, not because many of them were Jews, but because that wide chasm between the two, which was dug by scholastic scripturists, had not as yet been dug. Christ confirmed the ancient law, but gave life to the letter by his spirit, infused tradition with a breath of creative liberty, and attacked crystallized sacerdotalism on the fringe of spiritual life, which is the true life of man. Christ invoked the Old Testament as against the Old Temple and, without invoking the New Testament against the New Temple, I say that Christ cannot be hostile to Jewish tradition which gave him birth.

BISHOP

Traditional Judaism, however, was hostile to Christ, and continues to be.

GUEST

Jewish error cannot justify Christian error. The universality and the eternity and the greatness of Christianity are such that in its bosom there is room for Adam and the Israelites, Abraham and the pa-

triarchs, Moses and the prophets. Jean Izoulet, professor of social philosophy in the College of France, in a book entitled *Paris, Capital of Religions,* has just proposed the creation of a universal Temple, which would be called *The Moyseum,* into which all those who accept the faith of both Testaments might be admitted as members.

BISHOP

The Universal Temple of the faith is in Rome.

GUEST

The Temple of Rome is closed to Jews.

BISHOP

Because Jews do not believe that the God-Man has already come.

GUEST

But there are some, such as Izoulet, who, because of believing in Jesus, believe also in Moses.

BISHOP

The scholar whom you cite must be a Jew.

GUEST

Perhaps, just as some of the Popes of Rome and some of the Bishops of Spain were Jews. Furthermore, the words of Isaiah found an echo of life in the hearts of the apostles, and they have had it until to-day in the doctors of the Church, who were masters of the faith.

BISHOP

When Christ came, the Jews crucified him.

GUEST

That is to say, those who did not believe him to be the One who had been announced as the Messiah, crucified him: but there were some who believed, like Matthew, who wrote the first Gospel; and John, who gave his first mystical interpretation; and Peter, the first Pope of Rome. All those were also Jews.

BISHOP

Jews who believed in Christ when he came, since the name designates a people and a religion.

GUEST

It is Christian duty to attract those who do not yet believe in Christ. If the Jews are irreconcilable, it is no reason why Christians should imitate them. Christ can again enter into the synagogue to make the letter alive with his Spirit. The Spirit of Christ is called to be the universal conciliator of religions.

BISHOP

Of all?

GUEST

Yes, Your Grace. The nonconformist sects do not deny Christ: they repeat the "Our Father" which the Master taught, they revere the cross of his sacrifice and practice his commandments of love. Half of the population of Europe and their descendants who are scattered abroad profess Christianity as it is taught by these sects, and the other half profess Catholicism. In regard to the religions of the Orient, which are important because of the

enormous Asiatic population that professes them, they propose, as in Confucius, moral principles which are analogous to those which are accepted by Christianity. The voice of Wilson, a Christian of the Occident, is answered by the voice of Mahatma Gandhi in the Orient, whose human sentiment sums up in a single esoteric truth the morality of Christianity and Buddhism. In spite of the political anarchy and commercial sensuality of the modern world, the Spirit of Christ has penetrated the soul of humanity and has spread over the earth more than during any other period of history.

BISHOP

And Mohammedanism?

GUEST

It is the religion of peoples who have ceased to exercise influence in the forward march of humanity and are going down in open defeat, retiring from the Mediterranean, the ancient sea of civilization, which, ten centuries ago, they controlled. The women of Turkey have laid aside the veil and the men have abandoned the fez, suppressing, in these picturesque details, certain outward signs of the old spirit which gave them a personality foreign to Christian culture. The Sultan has fallen; Constantinople is to-day a European city. Furthermore, the Koran speaks of Mary and Jesus without hostility. . . .

BISHOP

When I see the really infernal pit into which your

learning and pride have sunk you, I feel sorry for you!

GUEST

Pardon me, Your Grace; I recognize how fragmentary and confused are the ideas of this conversation, but I believe that we are approaching the moment in which it will be possible to light up the darkness of that pit.

BISHOP

God grant it!

GUEST

He must grant it, because I am guided only by a good Christian purpose, and I ask saving light of the Spirit of Christ.

BISHOP

It is an act of piety to listen to you. You may go on.

GUEST

To continue, I say that if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him, and that if primitive religions developed ignorance, true religion ought to develop knowledge. Knowledge consists in morally perfecting life, in overcoming the human beast, and kindling in man his spiritual being, which is the same in all men. For such ends of life Christ is the way and the truth.

BISHOP

So that you look on religion as merely a useful instrument? . . .

GUEST

I merely define it as an activity of the genius of the species; a name which materialists give to the Holy Spirit. Religion is a spiritual power, autonomous and creative, which helps man in his evolution, adapting itself to the necessities of each period of history. In the period in which we live, we ought to recover self-consciousness, by overcoming rationalism, the influence of machinery, and the sensualities of our time.

BISHOP

It pleases me to hear you. But there is something lacking in your speech, perhaps because you reason too much. When you speak, the horizons of thought are widened; but there are vacuity and darkness in them. A great soul without the Catholic faith seems to me like the firmament on a starless night.

GUEST

There is a lack of comprehension between us which keeps us from coming to a mutual understanding, or, rather said, which prevents you from understanding me, since I believe that, in spite of everything, I understand you.

BISHOP

Which no doubt proves the superiority of a philosopher over a believer. . . .

GUEST

Do not treat me ironically, for I consider myself a

good Christian. Let us rend the misleading veil of words, as I suggested last night. I hope that in this way we will come to understand each other.

BISHOP

We shall see, afterward.

GUEST

The history of religion postulates two theories: evolution and revelation. According to the first, religious sentiment passed through successive stages of fetishism, pantheism, and polytheism, until it reached Hebrew monotheism and its flower, Christianity, which is still in a state of evolution. According to the other theory, the Only God revealed himself to the people of Israel from the most remote times of Adam and Abraham, unfolding his plan parallel with other religions of the earth, and preparing, from Moses to the Baptist, the coming of the God-Man, who was Jesus, the creator of an unchangeable Church. Writers consider these two theories antagonistic, but they may be complementary. The book entitled *Christus* gives a very good analysis of the historical facts relative to this problem.

BISHOP

I do not know it.

GUEST

It is a recent work.

BISHOP

I must read it.

GUEST

Taking humanity as a whole, it seems that all peoples have had an intuition of a Supreme Being, although it may have been without form and without name, and it is not difficult to discover this fact back of Incan fetishism, Hindu pantheism, and Greek polytheism. Inversely, within present-day monotheism, remains of those other forms of religion may be found. But it is certain that the Only God, adored by the Hebrews, at first without images, is personalized in the *Old Testament* under the name of Jehovah, which means Time, Eternal, Ancient of Days; that he prepares, during centuries, the appearance of the God-Man who is superior to the fetishistic, pantheistic or polytheistic conceptions of naturalism; and that he founds a humanist religion destined to rule the world. . . . Pardon me, Your Grace, if I weary you with this exceedingly didactic method of reasoning; but I need to lay my foundation on it, in order to go on to other considerations.

BISHOP

You do not weary me; on the contrary, I am listening attentively.

GUEST

Even the Socratic dialogues which Plato wrote soon become dull and tedious.

BISHOP

I am listening attentively.

GUEST

European religions, before Christ, worshiped natural forces as though they were gods: the light, fire, the lightning, water, the earth and its creatures, the heavens and their stars; or they adored the natural instincts and the human body becomes the center of worship, because it provides a canon for the figure of its gods, blending with its ceremonies the mysteries of sex and death. With Christ, humanity comes into possession of a new religious truth, adding the idea that man is separate from the exterior world, and that there is in him a spirit superior to his individual body. The metaphysical mystery of Christianity, as taught by Christ, is that man may ascend to the divine condition through love.

BISHOP

I repeat that I listen attentively, and let me now add, with delight.

GUEST

Another distinctive feature of Christianity is that it begins by creating a living God, affirming in his being the divine and universal individuality of man, freed from physical or social accidents, although, as it became diffused among the races of man, it could not hold itself aloof from its surroundings nor from history. Thus it took prophetism and Messianism from the Hebrews, philosophy and art from the Greeks, the pontificate, discipline, arms, law, and politics from the Romans, until the formidable organization of the Church, thanks to which it has

survived, was completed, spreading to the uttermost parts of the earth. From this struggle between the Christian ideal and historic reality come the transformations of the Church and the dissensions of the schisms.

BISHOP

I beg you not to begin again with your heresies.

GUEST

Your Grace, I am following Church Fathers and orthodox historians. Furthermore, I merely pretend to show, in rapid outline, the glory of the Church and the triumph of Christianity. From out of the darkness of Egypt, Assyria, and Persia, with their thousand monstrous gods, the tradition of Adam the Man, of Abraham the Patriarch, and of Moses the Leader, comes to Jesus, who ratifies the law of Sinai, and thus empties into the Mediterranean, that "river of living waters" of the Scriptures. Jesus Christ said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life,"* in its mystic sense; but in a certain historical sense, Christianity, when born, takes from Israel the Messianic inspiration for life, from Greece the dialectic instrument of truth, and from Rome the way of power. These are the three great peoples who were founders of the European civilization which, influenced by Christianity, has overcome the world. The Church of Christ thrives as a complex organization of prophets and apostles, of dialecticians and artists, of legislators and warriors, all inflamed by the Spirit which the gospel has revealed

to man. Love, Wisdom, and Power united, not separate, will be the salvation of man.

BISHOP

The Church is born and overcomes during its early centuries by virtue of its preachers and its martyrs. They are those who propagate the word of the gospel and who renew the sacrifice of blood. The Damascus road for converted and the Roman Circus for martyrs are the divine signs of Christianity in its beginnings, when the breath of God urged men on.

GUEST

But the conflict between ecclesiastical discipline and individual intuition appears in the first century: on one side, Roman Catholicism, of imperial tendency; on the other, the successors of Saint Paul the Greek and Saint John the Jew, two ardent and prophetic spirits. To define the conflict between mysticism and theology, faith and dogma, the personal sentiment of each soul and the collective authority of the Church, it is necessary to consider the doctrine of Christ above external worship.

BISHOP

How do you know it is?

GUEST

By the Gospels, especially that of Saint Mark.

BISHOP

Let us see.

GUEST

Because of his having healed a sick man on the Sabbath, which, like our Sunday, was a day of rites, the Pharisees reproach him, and Jesus replies: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." This signifies that the Great Teacher places more value on the human content of religion than on its liturgical forms. David, on one Sabbath, ate the loaves of shewbread in the house of Abiathar, and Jesus recalls that fact.

BISHOP

Ritual and charity are not excluded.

GUEST

Another day the Pharisees are defending certain priestly practices, and Jesus reproaches them: "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." This signifies that morality is worth more than ritual.

BISHOP

The ritual is a kind of adoration before God and of teaching before men.

GUEST

When Jesus drove out of the Temple the merchants who had converted it into a "den of thieves," as he called them, the Master exclaimed: "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." So he overturned the tables of the money-changers and drove from their places those who sold doves for

the sacrifices. The Temple must be a place of prayer, and its worship without blood and without usury.

BISHOP

This proves that in everything the Lord sought the greatest purity.

GUEST

Jesus also said to the Pharisees: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice." He reproved the priests who did not understand this sentence. Mercy is true charity, and sacrifice is the symbolical oblation of worship.

BISHOP

Do you wish to destroy the Temple?

GUEST

No, Your Grace. But how can we deny that Christ said to the priestly class of his time: "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in, hindering them from believing in me"? This is a clear protest, of everlasting significance.

BISHOP

I suppose that you do not condemn the priests and theologians who to-day serve Jesus Christ simply because, twenty centuries ago, he condemned the scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem, who thoroughly merited it.

GUEST

I condemn no one, for I have no right to condemn. I simply recall what the Master said. Thus clearly did he separate the spiritual or intimate life of man from the earthly or external life, pointing out the difference there is between ritual and faith, or between religious sentiment and ecclesiastical ceremonies.

BISHOP

In them he gave new forms to religious sentiment.

GUEST

When the Samaritan woman, according to John, said to him: "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship," Jesus replied: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The significance of this reply seems to me very clear.

BISHOP

No doubt it is, in so far as it refers to the abolishment of the old worship. Christ wept over Jerusalem, apostrophizing it as the city that killed its

prophets. He announced its ruin, and the legions of Titus destroyed it a few years later. In regard to the Temple, he rigorously condemned the practices of the scribes and Pharisees, nothing more. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." That is what the Master says about the worship of the Pharisees, which lacked the element of faith.

GUEST

That phrase is sufficient to prove that over against the cup of external rites he set the heart of man, which is a living chalice. But the Master made other even more expressive statements on this point. Of a Pharisee and a publican who were praying, one of them ostentatiously praising himself and the other praying with humility and feeling, he declared that he preferred the latter. He counseled his hearers to beware of the scribes who made a great show of walking up and down with pompous vestments and took the best seats in the synagogues, but who devoured the houses of widows under pretext of making long prayers. He condemned the hypocrites who went to far-off lands to convert the Gentiles, and then by their example made them fit for hell. He taught that it is more binding to swear by the Temple than by the gold of the Temple, to swear by the altar rather than by the gift on the altar, because the Temple sanctified the gold and the altar sanctified the gift. He

called the Pharisees a race of vipers, and told them the parable of the whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but within were full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanliness. All this leads one to suppose that Jesus cared but little for outward rites.

BISHOP

For rites, no. He condemned ceremonies which lacked spiritual life, the hypocrisy of men, and the practices of a worship which was in its death's throes when he came. On the ruins of the old Jerusalem he built the new.

GUEST

A spiritual Jerusalem, the city of God, the Church of souls.

BISHOP

In the first chapter of the Gospel of Saint John, we read the following: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." This is the new Church, our Church, the holy Church.

GUEST

But in the same passage that you quote, the following is added, in regard to the sons of God: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Therefore the way is to be found in grace, not in ritual.

BISHOP

Ritual is a way of obtaining grace.

GUEST

But the Lord says: "No one cometh to the Father, but by me. I am the door, he that entereth in through me shall be saved." That is what the Lord says.

BISHOP

The key of that door is the key of Saint Peter, which is in the custody of our Church. The first disciples of Jesus founded our Church, and in one of his last prayers to the Father, the Son spoke thus of his disciples: "I have given them thy word; as thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." It was thus that the Church began.

GUEST

It was thus that the Church began for the purpose of preserving the gospel, and its mission was to spread it among all peoples. But Christ says: "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." Now, after having seen his images and heard his words, I am searching for the Spirit of Christ. For many believers, the Church consists of the temple and the ritual; but I would like to have touch with something more impalpable than these, like something behind a veil, something beyond those forms.

BISHOP

When earthly worship has been ended, you will

find nothing but death, with the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

GUEST

Before death, life, and after death, the resurrection, which is again life. The Master talked more about life than death. In regard to the kingdom of God, it is not realized in space or time, but in the spirit of man. The only prayer that the Master taught his disciples does not ask of God to be allowed to go to his kingdom, but that his kingdom come to us.

BISHOP

To realize that here below the Lord founded his Church, which, for two thousand years, has been the school of his doctrine, the ark of his remembrance, and the altar of his adoration.

GUEST

That is all true, and you might even add that it is the House of the Lord; but you would immediately have to establish the difference between the dwelling and the one who dwells in it.

BISHOP

It does not surprise me to hear you make such a distinction, since I could easily see by our former conversations how much you like dialectic subtleties; but do not forget that Saint Paul, in his letter to Timothy, says, "The church is the house of the living God."

GUEST

For my part, I recall that the same Saint Paul calls the bodies of Christians "temples of God."

BISHOP

Are you sure of that?

GUEST

I have read it in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where the man of Tarsus writes to his followers: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

BISHOP

The matter treated there would require a long explanation.

GUEST

To understand this passage, it would be sufficient to recall these words of Christ: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Some of his hearers thought he referred to the Temple of Jerusalem; however, Saint John explains it in this way: ". . . But he spake of the temple of his body." In fact, they destroyed the temple of his body, and in three days he rebuilt it, rising from the dead.

BISHOP

The body of Christ is without equal and holy.

GUEST

But man ought to Christianize his body, raising up the Spirit of Christ in his conscience, according to his doctrine.

BISHOP

Theology and mysticism have gone deeply into these problems.

GUEST

The interpretation of Saint Paul coincides with that of Santa Teresa when she speaks of the "inner castle." After having described the seven dwellings and after telling how, in the most recondite of all, the soul finds itself with the living Jesus, the saint of Avila says that the castle does not exist, nor does the dweller appear in the bright image which she paints, because it all happens within the limits of the conscience, where ecstasy is not a sensation but a rapture of the individual spirit in communion with the universal Spirit. This makes us conceive of Christianity as a realization of that which is divine within us.

BISHOP

The earthly realization of Christianity is the Christian Church.

GUEST

Certainly, as a social institution.

BISHOP

As the mystical body of Christ, real and true.

GUEST

I do not discuss that. I simply say that the Church has justified the individual realization of Christianity in its saints, whether they reached that realization through the intelligence, as did Saint

Thomas, the Angel of schools, or by action, as did Saint Vincent of Paul, the apostle of charity, or by the feelings, as did Saint Francis of Assisi, the brother of all creatures. Scholasticism, asceticism, and mysticism are the justification of those realizations. The body of every man can be and ought to be the dwelling place of the invisible Christ.

BISHOP

The Church and Christ are one and the same thing.

GUEST

Christ and Christianity also ought to be one and the same thing.

BISHOP

By my faith, they are.

GUEST

And also Christianity and humanity. In our first conversation we reduced the different images of Jesus to the image of the man, and this to the symbolical form of the cross, which is the human body with arms widespread. In our second conversation we reduced the different Gospels of the Master to the moral sense of his doctrine, and this to a laconic commandment of love. In this conversation about the Spirit of the Messiah, I simply ask: Where shall we find the living God? In the temple of stone or in the temple of flesh?

BISHOP

In the temple of stone, where the Eucharist is

given, and in the temple of flesh, the man who receives it.

GUEST

The authorized book of the Abbot of Salesmes, Dom Guéranger, on the *Holy Sacrifice,* says that when the officiating priest exclaims during the mass: *Hoc est enim corpus meum,* elevating the host, and then exclaims: *Hic est calix sanguinis mei,* elevating the cup, the bread and the wine disappear to be converted into the flesh and blood of Christ.

BISHOP

So it is.

GUEST

The great mystery of transubstantiation consists, then, in converting certain material things into other things equally material, although divine.

BISHOP

Communion is with the body of the Redeemer, effectively sacrificed.

GUEST

The Indians of the farm communed in this way to-day in your mass.

BISHOP

Without doubt.

GUEST

But when the officiating priest says to the man who receives the wafer in his mouth: *"Accipit et manducate," "Take and eat";* and on raising the cup

of blood: *"Qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum," "Which is shed for many for the remission of sins,"* the book of Father Guéranger, *The Explanation of the Mass,* teaches that this is done as Jesus commanded in the Last Supper, to evoke the sacrifice of Calvary, and that the Lord, raised to eternal life, thus gives, inexhaustibly, his flesh and blood for the salvation of those who believe.

BISHOP

For that reason, he who gives it ought to be pure, and pure he who receives it.

GUEST

But this, as is easily seen, is communion with the body of Jesus, and not with the Spirit of Christ, which I proposed as the theme of this conversation.

BISHOP

It is the Holy Spirit who affects the transubstantiation.

GUEST

I understand that the Eucharist—*misterium fidei*—may possess a regenerative grace through the action of the Holy Spirit, but the Church itself demands from the believer a previous purification, through penitence and through piety. Nevertheless, there are many who receive the Sacrament with no conscientious understanding of it nor of themselves. There are some who commune every day, and yet do not die in odor of sanctity.

BISHOP

Unfortunately, that is true, but the Church is not to be blamed for such terrible sacrilege.

GUEST

The *Sacramental Representations* of Calderón revealed to the people during the seventeenth century, under the auspices of the Church, all the hidden significance of the Eucharist, representing Christian mysteries in the theater, just as Æschylus represented pagan mysteries in Greece.

BISHOP

Calderón was a clergyman.

GUEST

A clergyman and a poet. . . . I have read almost all his *Representations* with devotion and meditation. According to them, the material substance of the world is symbolized by the flour which nourishes us and the wine which intoxicates us; the soul, a prisoner of the flesh through the fall in sensual love, will free itself from earthly matter by the love of the spirit; and the Messiah, who was incarnated and shed his blood for us, teaches us in his sacrifice the way of that freedom.

BISHOP

It is not easy to understand the mystery of the Eucharist. The Abbé of Salesmes, whom you quoted a moment ago, calls it "the terrible Christian sacrifice." The death of Jesus on the cross

would have remained a simple historical fact if the Lord had not instituted the Great Mystery. That which happened once on Calvary is renewed until the end of the world. By his divine love Christ comes every day and is immolated in the host. The mass is the gospel dramatized for the benefit of the faithful in general; theology is the dialectical development of Christian doctrine; the Eucharist is the consecration of the sacrifice which we owe for the good of all.

GUEST

However, for many of the faithful, charity is a worldly festivity, the sacrifice of love an elegant virtue, and interior perfection an external ceremony. The spiritual mission of the Messiah cannot be realized in that form. Christ, according to his Mysteries, saves only those who raise him up in the individual soul.

BISHOP

According to the doctrine of its doctors and saints, the opinion of the Church is nothing else than that.

GUEST

However, Kempis says that the body of Christ is given in the Eucharist and the spirit in the gospel, because the word of this book is the lamp which the Lord left to guide our steps in this world.

BISHOP

Let us not pretend to understand that which is

impenetrable for our understanding. Kempis counsels us not to argue with our ideas, and not to reply to doubts which the devil raises when one reads the Scriptures. My son, let us do what Kempis counsels us, for that is best.

GUEST

As it became universal, Catholicism was obliged to establish contact with the most divergent forms of culture. Within Christianity there multiply today the grossest superstitions, as there are also the most sublime intuitions. There is a long stretch between the *Catechism* of Father Astete and the *Apocalypse* of Saint John, or between the preaching of a village priest and the *Suma* of Saint Thomas. The Christian Church was born of a sublime initiation which all do not understand, and of which its magnificent liturgy is but a pallid reflection. Without doubt there is an esoteric Christianity.

BISHOP

Truth is one, for all the faithful.

GUEST

But each soul receives from Truth only that part which it can contain. The faith of a converted Indian has but little in common with the faith of a Saint Augustine. Christ says, "I am the light of the world"; but his spiritual light, filtering through different souls, paints distinct figures in each conscience, like the light of the sun which pours through stained-glass windows of cathedrals.

BISHOP

A beautiful figure, which I hope you will not lay to the blame of the cathedrals.

GUEST

I do not know if you will wish to count me as a member of the Catholic community, but I do know that all Christianity is within me, with its writings and its rituals. You have heard with what passion I have spoken when we studied the iconography of Christ and commented on the Gospels. You would perhaps condemn me as a heretic, although the background of my religious sensitiveness is Christian; but I feel that the Spirit of Christ, like his image and his word, is something living and dynamic.

BISHOP

The attributes of God, in the Father, in the Son, and in the Spirit, have been fixed by dogma.

GUEST

You look on Christ from your high position in the Church; I feel him in the deepest depths of my life. I have an intuition that there is an invisible Church of Souls, of which the Master is the Head, and that each conscience can commune with the Spirit of Christ, just as the small innumerable points of a circle, through infinite radii, may unite themselves to the Center which governs them in its eternal law.

BISHOP

You skillfully conceal the most perverse ideas.

GUEST

No, Your Grace. Christ is a fountain of living water, and this escapes from immovable vessels to fertilize the spirit of man. The Master said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." This I do.

BISHOP

You mistake both the way and the fountain.

GUEST

Saint John puts into the mouth of Jesus a reminiscence of Isaiah: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The Master prophesied that the Spirit of Truth is his Spirit, and that he would return in spirit in order that the Truth might be revealed. The living waters which the prophet and the Master drank are those of a conscious and creative faith.

BISHOP

His Spirit animates our Church since its beginning. If irreligious people would study it better, there would be fewer dissenters and it would be more esteemed by those who deem themselves its adversaries.

GUEST

Do you count me among these last?

BISHOP

You sometimes seem to be among them.

GUEST

My religious ideal, Your Grace, is no other than to revive the invisible Christ in my conscience, by a spiritual mystery, just as the old-time mystics did it in a heroic manner; such an attitude is not hostile to forms of external worship, which others need or prefer.

BISHOP

The Lutheran heresy was less regrettable than the insidious heresies of those who pretend to remain good Catholics, without being such. We know our enemies, whether without or within our ramparts. That is our strength.

GUEST

The Church has frequently raised a doubt as to whether the Spirit of God spoke by mouth of its mystics. Joan of Arc, a Christian of action, Luis de Leon, a Christian of science, and Teresa de Ahumada, a Christian of feeling, were all suspected of heresy and suffered persecution by ecclesiastical courts. Blessed were they, as the Lord announced on the Mount.

BISHOP

The Church is infallible in the choosing of its saints. Initial caution does not imply definite error. We avoid compromise with heresy. We fear the enemy within the citadel. For that reason the Pope has thundered against so-called "modernists" in his encyclical *De Pascendi.*

GUEST

Perhaps for the purpose of canonizing them later on. . . . I was in Rome when that encyclical came out, and I have referred to it in one of my books.

BISHOP

It does not appear that you have followed the advice it contained.

GUEST

It is impossible for me to escape the demands of my own understanding, and you already see that my thesis is reduced to pointing out the dynamic suggestion which I find in the multiple images of Jesus, in the divergent versions of the four Gospels, and in the various interpretations of the Spirit of Christ as Saviour.

BISHOP

If you were in the United States, you would already have founded a new sect. . . .

GUEST

Your Grace, I see that you are making fun of me, and this hurts me.

BISHOP

Sects are ephemeral as a wisp of smoke, while the Church of Peter, itself a rock, stands as it has stood for twenty centuries.

GUEST

I propose no new sect, since my attitude is individualistic. On the contrary, I aspire, rather, to the

fusion of all sects into a single Christian communion: a creation, as you see, not of a disciplinary character, but spiritual, esoteric, invisible. As this could not be realized, except in the temple which is each man, and in conscience capable of that high initiation, I believe that I do not assume the attitude of dissident theologians, but rather, that of individual mystics.

BISHOP

You assume that attitude with a certain air of rebellion which does not become true Christian sentiments.

GUEST

It may seem so to you because of my emphatic manner of speech, but this springs only from my temperament and intense conviction.

BISHOP

In addition, you unduly intellectualize mysticism.

GUEST

The doctors of the Church have also intellectualized it in their different works.

BISHOP

I am not reproaching you; I simply point out the fact. I can only add that I listen to you with real delight, and that the Catholic Church has produced the greatest mystics, who, in intelligible books, have made clear the doctrine which explains this singular phenomenon of grace. But there is a difference

between practical mysticism and theoretical mysticism. This last is a dialectic bridge stretched between Theology, the science of God, and Psychology, the science of man. Practical mysticism is the exceptional divine gift, the unitive way of the Spirit. Sometimes Christ combines, in a single being, the contemplative saint and the learned saint who teaches him, as in San Juan de la Cruz, or the Serafin de Avila. I do not know if you have traveled those paths.

GUEST

Through the study of books, a great deal; through contemplative introspection also. Allow me, however, to be somewhat reserved on this point. I merely wished to justify, with these reflections, the orthodox character of my point of view, which is an attempt to exalt the supremacy of the interior life of man, his true spiritual being, above external forms of worship, which are hardly more than a historical appearance.

BISHOP

The Spirit came down on the apostles like tongues of fire, and remained in the Church.

GUEST

It remained to illuminate the hidden meaning of the message, because the Word was made flesh in order to make the word articulate, so that men might hear it; because Jesus is the Man and because his word is also Spirit.

BISHOP

The Church is the depository of the word.

GUEST

Christ said to the Pharisees, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above." With the limits of both worlds clearly defined, he announced that he would come to the souls of those who would believe in him. And to all he paternally gave this advice: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." This is the *Maranatha,* which in Syriac means to say, "Behold! the Lord cometh." Christ teaches, "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also." The Son announces the Father, just as the prophets announced the Son; but both are one with the Spirit, which will come to the spirit of each man. When the Spirit is in us, he manifests himself in gifts of knowledge, holiness, and love. The wise mystical Doctor, in his book *De Imitatione Christi,* tells us, "Many follow Christ, until the bread is broken; few until the cup is drunk." The bread is the Eucharist, the wine is personal sacrifice. For that reason he adds, "Many love his kingdom, few bear his cross." And Kempis exclaims: "Oh! my soul! look well at this! Close the gates of thy sensuality, so that thou mayest hear what the Lord says unto thee!" That is what I did, your Grace, in a time of loneliness and sorrow. . . .

BISHOP

In spite of the great hope for your salvation

which those words leave in my mind, I take the liberty of saying that just as books on knight-errantry turned the head of Don Quixote, so books on false religion have affected your brain. Walk humbly, and you will find the way. Pray with faith and put away from you all that crowd of dangerous books.

GUEST

During many years I have wandered like a thirsty traveler through arid deserts, reading the religious literature of all races, searching for the fountain which might quench my spiritual thirst. I have read the sacred books on which the different religions are founded, from Genesis to Koran; I have read the metaphysical works on which philosophies are based, from Plato to Kant; I have read the works of mystic writers, doctors of doctrine or poets of feeling, from Pythagoras to Swedenborg, and nothing, Your Grace, has satisfied my longing. My reason found food in their pages and my imagination found recreation, but the living sentiment of God did not become incarnate in my life. Those monuments of humanity, although interpreted by historians and commentators, remained obscure, enigmatical, and sterile.

BISHOP

It hurts me to hear you.

GUEST

For a little while, back in my youth, I thought

that the *Bhâgavad-Gitâ* might prove an oasis in that desert.

BISHOP

I remember you quoted that book the night before last, but I confess that I do not know it.

GUEST

It is a Hindu book whose title, in our language, is *The Song of the Blessed One,* which is a literal translation from the Sanscrit. Emile Bournouf, who translated it into French, considers it one of the most beautiful books which have come from the hands of men, and recommends that it be read by societies which pretend to be Christian, but which are founded, he says, on the narrowest kind of egoism: self-interest. The work is a poem in the form of a dialogue and is an episode in the Mahâbhârata. Its principal personage is Krishna, the tenth incarnation of Vishnu, the founder of one of the religions subsequent to Buddha which bears many resemblances to Christianity.

BISHOP

Tell me something of its argument.

GUEST

The scene is laid in the plain of Kuruxetra, where a combat is going on between Krishna and Arjuna. Sanjaya relates the dialogue between the two. The chariots and troops, with shields and lances, ready to enter into combat, stop face to face, and the warrior Arjuna asks who the adversaries are who

make common cause with the criminal sons of Dhritarasthra. Krishna stops his chariot before Bhishma Droña and *all the guardians of the earth,* saying, "Prince, behold all the *kurus* assembled!" Arjuna sees his parents, his grandparents and other relatives; he understands that the war is fratricidal, and, cast down in mind, he says, "I will fight no more!" And then Krishna, who is the tenth incarnation of Vishnu, explains to him, in successive dialogues, the mysteries of action and contemplation, of good and evil, of life and death, of rebirths as a way of perfection, and of wisdom as a means of attaining to divine Unity.

BISHOP

But, who is the Blessed One?

GUEST

The Blessed One is the Only God, and he is also the Man who comes to unite himself with him. His doctrine is based on knowledge of the Creator and love of his creatures, although not as in Christian doctrine. "A science which shows the indivisible Being in divisible beings is"—Krishna teaches —"a true science." "A science," he adds, "which is bound to the individual as though it were the whole, is a science of darkness." The critical examination of knowledge is astonishing, because it excels positivism, rationalism, and intuitionism. In regard to love, it surpasses the platonic teachings, and I dare say that it very closely resembles some Christian doctrines.

BISHOP

That is saying too much. . . .

GUEST

Perhaps, but hear me: I had, more through my æsthetic than my religious temperament, a natural intuition of the Only God infused in the world, when I read the Hindu dialogue for the first time; but I was then very young, my ideas were not very clear, and my experience of books and men was scant. The teaching of Krishna and the revelation of Arjuna moved me, because I learned in the successive chapters the difference which exists between God and the world, between soul and body, between God and gods, between Man and men, between matter and ideas, until I saw, like the warrior of Mahâbhârata, the Universal Form, the pathway of ascent to the Supreme Beginning, the distinction between demoniacal condition and divine condition manifested by the attributes of knowledge, of renunciation and of faith.

BISHOP

It is a pity that you should not owe such spiritual development to our Christian books.

GUEST

Do not lose heart, Your Grace. I have reread the *Bâhagavad Ghita* recently, and it moved me less than do the *Gospels,* which made no impression on me then.

BISHOP

Then, you are no longer insensible to the Gospels.

GUEST

Very far from it!

BISHOP

That is a confession that reassures me.

GUEST

To-day I find my surest spiritual guide in the *Gospels*. All sacred books, and the history that chains them together, and the philosophy that explains them, are reading which, far from being pernicious, helps me to understand the profound meaning, always more human and more luminous, of the Christian message. Now I understand why the Lord said that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, and when I hear the Master of Man speak, the contradictions of fanaticism calmly fade away in the light of his truth.

BISHOP

In the ninth chapter of Saint Mark we read: "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

GUEST

To-day I am familiar with the beliefs that are common to all religions, under the apparent diversity of allegories and names; and, higher than a theological definition of Divinity, I value a mystical

inspiration which may serve present-day men for their comfort, their inspiration and their moral perfection. I believe that we must look for that inspiration in the Spirit of Christ. The doctrine of the Bhagâvad-Gitâ is too intellectual or too abstract; it leads to Nirvana, and cannot serve for that perfect culture for which we are striving. Only Christ could speak to the hearts of men of the Occident, to-day sunken in materialism as in a tomb, and raise them by love, in visible beings; because that is the most pressing Christian mission of our time.

BISHOP

For what purpose?

GUEST

For the perfection of man and the pacification of the earth. The realm of nature, by the help of materialistic science and mechanical art, is quenching the light of the spirit, and the condition of the world to-day brings to mind the worst days of pagan decadence.

BISHOP

Similar days preceded the coming of Christ.

GUEST

Science and mechanics are not sufficient to bring about the unity of earth. Material means must be superseded by moral revival. Humanity, originally divided into groups, because of geographical conditions, races, tongues, and instincts, needs a single religion to create the spiritual unity of the human

race. That is the mission of the Spirit of Christ; to create love in the individual and fraternity in society.

BISHOP

It is not easy to do that, given the laxity of customs, the pride of the rulers of the world, and the impiety that prevails among people in general. The Bacchanalia return. Woman has again denuded herself to dance in the orgy.

GUEST

It was thus on earth, twenty centuries ago, when Christ came.

BISHOP

Saint Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, says that man was not created for woman, but woman for man, and that she ought to keep silent and carry on her head the marks of submission, out of respect for the angels. But woman has rebelled against man.

GUEST

Woman has rebelled, because she has gained self-consciousness, like the citizen, the workman, the student. If the woman in the home, the citizen in the forum, the workman in the factory, and the student in the school do not know how to use their lives for good, it is our duty to guide them in spiritual learning. Individual liberty is, *par excellence,* a Christian gift, and its apprenticeship is hard.

BISHOP

The struggle with evil has become terrible.

GUEST

It is true that it is terrible, and victory will be on the side of evil, that is to say, of passions, instinct and brute force, if the various religions continue crystallized in rituals that lack spiritual life, and if all civil institutions, like the press, the theater, the school, the factory, and the state itself, forget that it is their duty to care for souls, that they have a mission of fraternity on earth and justice among men.

BISHOP

This disastrous state of affairs began when the Church of Rome lost control of the world.

GUEST

It began, Your Grace, when man forgot Christ, as to-day science, art, and politics forget Him who is the invisible Man. When Christ becomes a reality in the conscience of each man, as I have explained in our two former dialogues, his Spirit will transcend to thought, to custom, and to institutions.

BISHOP

I declare, my son, your ideas seem to me increasingly contradictory and incomprehensible.

GUEST

The image of Christ concentrates the Catholic liturgy which begins with Saint Paul; the word

of Christ concentrates the Protestant dialectic which begins with Luther; the Spirit of Christ concentrates the new revelation which begins with Swedenborg. The first is based on authority; the second on intelligence; the third on intuition. The individualist dream of an invisible Christ condenses the three into a single vision of the Man. The human body of Jesus showed the mystery of Christ on earth, the word of Christ awakened the conscience of man, and the Spirit of God lights up a possible way of sublime truth in the life of every man. The initiated in Christian mystery could constitute on earth an invisible fraternity by means of which the providential forces which rule history might share in human evolution.

BISHOP

Are you a Theosophist?

GUEST

I am not. I have never taken part in their lodges, nor do I believe that my point of view can be confused with that of Theosophists. The adherents of Theosophy, who are individuals of impressionable sensibility and candid character, have created a religious movement which does not merit severe condemnation because it lacks efficacy, nor disdain because it is based on a very high philosophical ideal. I have read almost all their books, beginning with the *Secret Doctrine*, which is a modern Bible both chaotic and of enormous extent, and on concluding those readings, as also after

having read the texts of the ancient religions, I have found in the Gospels, as I have already told you, the clearest spiritual guide for the perfecting of man.

BISHOP

When I asked you, the night before last, if you were a Catholic, I perhaps could see in your reply that, although you are in origin, you have ceased to be one; and when, last night, I asked if you were a Protestant, you replied you were not, just as you now reply negatively when I ask if you are a Theosophist, a Buddhist, or something of the kind. . . . I declare that I do not find it easy to understand you.

GUEST

If, in order to understand me, Your Grace, you need to put me in some category, you may simply call me Christian.

BISHOP

Christian? . . .

GUEST

I am a Christian, both by lineage and by sentiment. In the name of Christ I recognize in every man a brother, whether he be a Catholic, a Protestant, or a Buddhist, and you may even add the other confessions. There you have my shortest and most simple definition.

BISHOP

Short, yes; but not simple.

GUEST

In the Catholic cathedral of Buenos Aires, the front with its colonnade is Greek; the figures in relief above the colonnade and under the angle of the roof reproduce a Jewish theme; the dome is Roman, and under it rests the body of General San Martin, a lay revolutionist, which fact does not prevent his having been, as liberator, the most perfect Christian gentleman.

BISHOP

What are you trying to prove with that example?

GUEST

That in the matter of religion, even the things that seem simple are, doubtless, as complex in their intimacy as man is in nature and in history.

BISHOP

All you say would not be censurable if you would accept authority in religious matters.

GUEST

I accept it in Christ, and his gospel is my law.

BISHOP

You speak too haughtily.

GUEST

For speaking thus I invoke the memory of Saint Peter of Alcántara. In a letter addressed to Santa Teresa, dated in Avila the 14th of April, 1562, protesting because this saintly woman had sought the opinion of theologians in regard to the institutions

she had founded, Saint Peter of Alcántara says to his friend: "Perfection of life must not be discussed except with those who live it, because no one, as a rule, has any knowledge or opinion except of what he himself does, and one must not ask for help of Christian counselors, whether it is well to follow them or not, because the counsel of God cannot help being good, and He who gave counsel will give the remedy." As you see, Your Grace, it is a Spanish saint, in the great century of the counter-Reformation, who helps me with his judgment.

BISHOP

But it is a pity that you insist on proclaiming religious individualism, which is a form of spiritual anarchy.

GUEST

I have already told you that the most exalted mystics were anarchists of that kind, and the Church, after censuring them, has then canonized them.

BISHOP

When they did not rebel against her.

GUEST

In their sublime unconsciousness, I believe that Francisco de Assisi and Teresa de Ahumada, whom we to-day call saints, did rebel. *The Little Flowers* and *The Dwellings* are two confessions of how those solitary souls understood Christian love. Brighter than the lamp of the ritual, the flame of transfixion burned in them.

BISHOP

They were exceptions, and not every one reaches the Lord through those gates of fire.

GUEST

They reached God without the mediation of the Church, and that is serious for the Church. The unitive way of mystics is not through the offices of the Church, but through ecstasy, knowledge, pain, and charity which is the love of God in his creatures. There are many ways, and Christ gave no one the right to forbid them.

BISHOP

The Church does not forbid them, although it is she who watches over them; and she well knows that without her help neither Saint Francis nor Santa Teresa would have been able to get as near to Christ as they did. Therefore you are wrong when you say that the union of man with Christ is possible, either without the Church or against the Church.

GUEST

I am not proclaiming the rebellion of believers, but, rather, the necessity that the Catholic creed open wide the ways of the inner life for all those who are not satisfied with being merely within the Church, because the Church is within them and they long to receive the invisible Christ in their consciences.

BISHOP

That depends on divine grace and individual

merit. The Church is the common home of the faithful. In her the initial light of Christian Truth has been kept burning during past ages.

GUEST

Without doubt the Church is a magic mirror, in which the light of the Gospels still shines in all its original splendor, and from that focus of the ages irradiates, as in a series of concentric haloes, the free interpretation of individuals and of sects.

BISHOP

Haloes of a light that gradually grows more dim until it loses itself in the darkness of heresy or atheism, and in that lies the danger.

GUEST

If one advances by transitions, looking for the spiritual colors of Christ as the archetype of the Invisible Man, we can pass from the realistic Gospel of Matthew to the mystic Gospel of John, and from these to the different confessional interpretations, until we come to a freer philosophic evocation, without getting away from the Christ of the Gospels, through circles of light which radiate from the same luminous center.

BISHOP

I do not understand what you mean by that.

GUEST

To perceive the Spirit of Christ by intuition, in

order to make it subjectively the Master of Man and guide of life.

BISHOP

The Church has already done what you wish, presenting in Jesus the ideal of man on earth and the judge of souls in the kingdom of heaven.

GUEST

But I do not want to make of Jesus a man of sorrows and an immovable God, too far off from us in infinite space; I would like to humanize him as the romantic and mystic awakener of every conscience, for the perfecting of man in understanding and action.

BISHOP

That also is what the Church is trying to do.

GUEST

To do so the Church institutes a liturgical worship; I propose a norm of individual life, inherent in each conscience.

BISHOP

The Church also proposes that.

GUEST

The Church excludes from its midst those who do not practice its rites, and the question I raise is whether the Spirit of Christ can be the Saviour of a man who is free from the observance of rites, and come to be the Messiah of the entire human race.

BISHOP

You are dreaming of things that might lead us into a state of real chaos. The Western world was saved because Rome did not abdicate its scepter. The Church has been for twenty centuries the compass by which human history has set its course.

GUEST

Without doubt, Catholic Christianity has been the prime meridian throughout our era. To its inspiration we owe the universality of the Bible, the resurrection of Rome, the salvation of the Græco-Latin culture, the conversion of the barbarians, the creation of modern Europe, the realization of geographical discoveries, the unification of human culture, and the revival of the arts and sciences. Even events that seem hostile to that tradition, such as the religious Reformation of the sixteenth century and the democratic Revolution of the nineteenth century, are nothing more than branches of the Christian trunk, and must go back to that Meridian in order to determine their importance. But this obliges the Church of Rome, since the last war and in the midst of the present crisis, to assume a creative attitude, as it has done on similar occasions in the past. The world needs anew the coming of the Messiah; and if he came to earth twenty centuries ago as a man of flesh, the Christ of ritual and temples, to-day we await the social Christ, who will come in spirit, as he announced, for the lifting up of souls and the peace of nations.

BISHOP

Humanity in vain awaited his coming when the first thousand years of our era had passed, and after another thousand years, in tribulation, we are awaiting him; but the Spirit of Christ, when he came in the flesh, remained in his Church for the comfort of mankind.

GUEST

Recall that passage in Luke. The Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God was to come, and Jesus replied: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there!" and then he added: "for behold the kingdom of God is within you." We have here an important declaration in the mouth of Christ: *"The kingdom of God is within you."* His new coming, therefore, will not be a material advent, but a human realization which will transcend from life to ideas, customs, and institutions. Hartmann, in his *Life of Jesus,* pretends that the Gospels were written long after the time of Jesus, and that from them there was eliminated a part of the esoteric teaching which encouraged materialistic interpretations, influenced by Jewish deism and Roman politics. For Hartmann, Jesus is a prophet inspired by celestial wisdom, and Christ is an allegory of his doctrine. I believe, on the contrary, that the esoteric teaching of the Gospels is beginning now to be revealed to us in all its power; that Jesus was a historical reality, as Man, as Master, as God; and that Christ is not an allegory, but a living, dynamic Spirit, which,

for twenty centuries, has been working in the inmost being of the human species for its redemption.

BISHOP

Still I have read in the papers that there are today some who expect a second temporal coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

GUEST

Yes, Your Grace; and even sects have been organized to await him, teaching the signs by which he may be known, so that mankind may not crucify him anew; one such sect of Buddhist origin is known as "The Western Star," and has followers in Buenos Aires. A similar movement is the *Ahmaddiyya,* which was born in the Punjab, and which has founded a branch in London. Some say that the new Christ has already been born in Ahmad de Quadian, or in another man who, while preparing for his mission, lives now in Tibet, now in Syria, in vague, mysterious places. All this, however, is in contradiction to the word of Christ. For we must not forget that Luke, in the seventeenth chapter of his Gospel, in speaking of Christ and his second coming, puts these words in his mouth: *"The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day."*

This declares that Christ, the Son of man, will return, not materially, but in spirit, and that he will be announced by a new light which may spring up in every human being from the depths of the subconsciousness, for that is the lightning which will lighten out of the one part under heaven. In the tribulation of our time every man ought to search within himself to find that great Quickener, whose influence will kindle science, art, and morality into a new idealistic revival.

BISHOP

In spite of your optimism, I cannot get free myself from the shadows that lower on the horizon of our age, and you will recognize with me that humanity has completely lost its bearings.

GUEST

The Spirit of Christ can again point out the way.

BISHOP

He alone could do it.

GUEST

In order that he may do so again, it is necessary that we reconcile all forms of worship in Sublime Truth, and that we restore the supremacy of the invisible man over the material instruments of science, art and politics. If the Church said, Faith, Hope and Charity; if Revolution said, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity; Society of our time must say, Justice, Labor and Love. This is, without doubt, the new Christian watchword.

BISHOP

Justice, Labor and Love! . . . But who is to define this new watchword and spread it abroad?

GUEST

The Spirit of Christ will propagate it, and we human beings will ourselves define it, when we have defined Christ according to the needs of our time. To define Christ is to define him in the Son of man, and the Gospel is the key. Our two former conversations have shown us the "way" and the "truth"; this one may show us the "life," or Christianity as realization.

BISHOP

Christian realization, for the faithful, consists in obedience and deeds of charity.

GUEST

In obedience to Christ, and in charity, it is true; but this is not a question of the giving of alms, in which the beggar is a deceiver and the giver a speculator who buys stock in heaven. Real charity is something purer and more difficult. In regard to obedience, it consists in work in the service of an ideal, and to obey Christ it is necessary to know him. Liturgical art has shown us his body; Christian teaching has shown us his soul. Jesus Christ is man in the fullness of his spiritual possibilities.

BISHOP

Without doubt, Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

GUEST

The Son of God is the Son of man; and, according to the Gospel of Saint Mark, Jesus said, "The Son of man came, not to be served, but to serve others and to give his life a ransom for many." Jesus also said: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Your Grace, the times have arrived in which these declarations must be remembered.

BISHOP

Remembered and explained. . . .

GUEST

To imitate Christ is to serve humanity; to save life is to save its ideal; and to overcome oneself, by main force, is to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

BISHOP

All this should be done, but within our Church, since the Lord said, "He that gathereth not with me scattereth."

GUEST

But Christ also said: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few." "The laborer is worthy of his hire." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

BISHOP

The Lord said that before his Church was organized.

GUEST

Twenty centuries later the world has grown, and man has grown. When the Church was born, the world of Rome was limited to the coasts of the Mediterranean and humanity worshiped material divinities. To-day, the world extends to the seven seas, it has been proved that the earth is round, and man, freed by the spirit of Christ, feels that he has new wings. If the Master then said: "Whosoever shall receive this child in my name, receiveth me," it was because he was giving over his work to future humanity.

BISHOP

Christ is God.

GUEST

He is God, but in the Son. And just as the Father manifests himself in his creation, which is the universe, and in it we discover and adore him, according to the passion of Saint Francis of Assisi and the doctrine of Fray Luis de Granada, so also in the creation of the Son, which is the Christian art, we ought also to discover him in order to know him better.

BISHOP

Christ is in his Church and there we must look for him.

GUEST

Christian art, as the most beautiful manifestation of his spirit, was born of the Christian Church. Among the grandeurs of the Catholic Church there may be counted, no doubt, that of having fused into

one single worship the metaphysical, æsthetic, and moral necessities which constitute the spiritual life of man. If the Old Testament revealed the religion of the Only God, the New Testament revealed the religion of the Only Man. The liturgy responds to those necessities of the conscience.

BISHOP

All that you say is true, and it is also true that the Church had the protection of art in the name of Christ, although art claimed to be a child of Greece. The Catholic Church, which preserved Greek culture from being forgotten and the Latin language and Roman institutions from ruin, did so due to the worship of images, the fruitful mother of modern art.

GUEST

You are right, and in regard to beauty I believe that there are two distinct forms of æsthetic creation: the classic, which is more external and formal; and the Christian, which is freer and more subjective, as is all Christianity in so far as it is considered a resurrection of the spiritual man. Greek paganism, above all else, created canonical sculpture and architecture; Catholicism, on the other hand, infused into the ancient marbles the passional animation of human life, and from the small temple, the dwelling place of the gods, it erected a house for man, throwing up the tremendous structures of Gothic cathedrals, filled with mystic inspiration. As its contribution, painting brought to the altars a new revelation; the human portrait, the mirror of the

individual soul; the landscape of nature, indifferent to pain, and the vestments which wrap the body with their illusory opulence, as the flesh wraps the spirit. From the medieval churches came the modern theater which shows the struggles of Christian free will, and the taste for pompous staging, with its lyricism and popularity. The mass, as a liturgical drama, contained these new mysteries in germ, and at the impulse of its inspiration, mysticism, poetry, and music were scattered abroad, like so many other kingdoms of beauty that Christ enlarged.

BISHOP

It moves me to listen to you.

GUEST

In regard to putting this into practice, it all consisted in replacing the puerile Venus of mythology by Eves, Susannahs, Salomes, Judiths, and Marys—women of soul. The maltreated Christs of the Prætorium, the despairing Christs of Gethsemane, the bleeding Christs of Calvary, possess an undeniable beauty when they come from the hands of an Angelicus, a Leonardo, or a Greco; but this is especially true when one discovers in literature and in music the fourth dimension of the human drama, which is the spiritual dimension. Then Christian art exalts the beauty of pain with greater profundity than did ancient tragedy. Then art enters into the twilight zone of the subconscious and the protagonist need not be seen.

BISHOP

Christian music and poetry are arts of the conscience, and the mysteries of destiny have been revealed in them with greater depth than in pagan art.

GUEST

The women of the Bible have reached their full personality in poetry, as literary personages, better than in the plastic arts, because the human conscience is infinite in its possibilities. The *Judith* of Hebbel was taken from an impressive though grim story, and from a simple verse came the *Salome* of Oscar Wilde. Both reveal all feminine mystery in the spiritual love which cuts off the head of the gloomy Holofernes and in the carnal love which secures the head of John the pure.

BISHOP

Pagan art searches after the eternal immobility of the canon; Christian art searches for the internal fecundity of life.

GUEST

Without Christianity there would be no Sigismund who dreams of his kingdom, no Hamlet who dreams of his action, no Faust who dreams of his youth, no Madame Bovary who dreams of her love, no Don Quixote who dreams of knight-errantry; all these personages are much more profound and significant than all the protagonists of pagan poems whose twin images appear in the frozen forms of plinths and metopes.

BISHOP

It is certain that poetry did not reach its fullness of power until after Christ.

GUEST

It was only after Christ that poetry could venture out into the gloomiest regions of human mystery and go down into the hells of misery. . . .

BISHOP

The Word of God, in the word of man made divine by the Gospel, created new possibilities for art.

GUEST

And there was for the human soul even a sublimer language, which, converted into harmony, came down from heaven. Music is, *par excellence,* the Christian art. No doubt music existed before Christ, but it was only after Christ that it came into its symphonic fullness, because the interior mystery of man is the mystic source of song. The *Novena Sinfonia* of Beethoven and the *Parsifal* of Wagner would not exist without Christianity. Their harmonies are born, converted into beauty, from those same hidden sources where the parables of the gospel, converted into moral teaching, were born. Beethoven wrote the *Solemn Mass* in the same period of mental maturity in which he wrote the *Novena Sinfonia;* and Wagner wrote *Parsifal* after having written *Tetralogia,* as a piece that excelled his anterior work. Furthermore, the same cosmic wave flows through all the works of both these geniuses, fertilizing the interior life of man

in the bosom of God. And that is Christianity. All modern music expresses the keen torture of elegiac love, on mingling the suffering of sin and death with the delights of the instinct, allaying the sorrows of absence in the ineffable confronts of solitude, or overcoming the calm grandeur of the external world with the frantic emotion of heroism.

BISHOP

Christ is, without doubt, the great explorer of all spiritual kingdoms.

GUEST

His figure moves more in time than in space, and because of that his own form was vague, dynamic, changeable, rather like the theme of a symphony. His portrait belongs to the subjective rather than to the plastic arts.

BISHOP

It would be said, however, that suffering is in Jesus human and transient, while the eternal and divine is in him beauty, serenity, and love.

GUEST

I also believe that the æsthetic fascination of Jesus is the definite characteristic of his physical and moral person. The Church has multiplied images which show the irresistible charm of the young Teacher, sometimes with exaggerated pulchritude and sweetness. The beautiful Nazarene who talked to the Samaritan woman by the side of the well has won as many hearts as the pale and hungry Christ of Olivet. Beauty has worked as great mir-

acles as piety. It is for that reason that the music of Beethoven always rises superior to nature and grief, with the quiet song of goodness, which brings happiness in a Christian sense.

BISHOP

Why talk of Christian ugliness and pagan beauty?

GUEST

That is spoken of as one speaks of pagan happiness and Christian sorrow, through a sophism or through frivolity.

BISHOP

Pagan happiness! Commonplace of crack-brained individuals. Bagatelle of fools who are tainted with false learning! Could one speak of pagan happiness in the presence of the pain of Prometheus and the desperation of Fedra and the bitterness of Œdipus? What happiness is there in the Eleusinian mysteries, or in the fatality of the tragedies of Æschylus? No happiness can be found in the primitive cruelty of the rhapsodies of Homer, nor in the monstrous beastiality of the myths of Hesiod, nor in the tyrannical passion of the dramas of Sophocles. The daily life which Plutarch describes with precision of anecdotes and places, is not less sorrowful than that of man in every epoch. The Republic of Plato tolerates slavery, which certainly is not the happiness of the slave. The Greek soul is bounded on one side with logic, and on the other with the lowest instincts: it might be called a centaur with the head of Socrates. Nor is such a symbol happy.

There was neither happiness nor peace, not even in Olympus, where the wayward divinities of that people dwelt.

GUEST

When the spirit of Greece laughs, as in the burlesque comedy of Aristophanes, the erotic epigram of Anacreon, or the satiric fable of Lucian, its laughter is grotesque, superficial, and sorrowful. Hellenic art imprisoned the body of man in the canon and the soul of man in fatality. Christian art freed man, Greek art and politics were overcome by Christianity, and from the legacy of their culture there remain only their dialectical instruments. Athens was mistress in the art of reasoning, and after Christ we have continued using this art, because in that consisted its real genius.

BISHOP

That is true. Athens taught the world the art of organizing ideas, as Rome taught it the art of organizing wills. The definite contributions of pagan civilization are reduced to that.

GUEST

For that reason, when we recall them to-day, Athenian life appears with seductive clarity and Roman life with overpowering greatness. The one is queen in philosophy, the other in politics, but both are incomplete, and European civilization of modern times, assimilating the two, surpasses them and perfects them with Christianity which incorporates the sentiment of man with Occidental culture, making of man, not a worshiper of nature, but its

master through the help of science, and not the servant of Cæsar, but a collaborator with the state through liberty.

BISHOP

Nevertheless, your method of explaining history does not accord with that which is taught in school texts.

GUEST

Ah! Your Grace: school texts are deformed by historical myths! Nothing is so necessary to the intellectual health of our time as the revision of certain commonplaces and certain sophisms of the centuries which float in the living waters of tradition like the remains of dead peoples and of forgotten cultures. For my part, I confess that I have never allowed myself to be influenced by those pernicious legends.

BISHOP

Not everyone can recognize them, so as to be on guard against them.

GUEST

I know it, but I have always believed that by making use of the cold technique of pagan art, Christian sentiment created a more authentic beauty, and in regard to the political greatness of Rome, the lives of its Cæsars, described by Suetonius, were sufficient to show me the repugnant vileness of the empire, of a human level vastly inferior to the much-discussed morality of modern democracies. To keep me from error, I had art as my guide, which

is, as I told you two nights ago, the most concrete revelation of human mysteries.

BISHOP

Art?

GUEST

Yes, Your Grace. In the thirteenth century it was purified by architects who builded the Gothic cathedrals, by painters like Giotto, poets like Dante and, afterward, by musicians like Palestrina. During the Renaissance, painting with Leonardo da Vinci and sculpture with Michelangelo demonstrated in plastic art the value of the spiritual man, making their technique a means and not an end. For that which is called the Renaissance is not such in regard to pagan art except as a renewal of the means, but for other ends, and in that sense the Renaissance is an essentially Christian creation, just as medieval mysticism was before it, and democratic romanticism afterward. Those three centuries, the thirteenth, the sixteenth and the nineteenth, the greatest of our era, were born of Christian humanism. When the Saint of Assisi took for his habit the coarse tunic of a rustic and a simple piece of cord, creating the vestment in which the glorious Dante went down into the sepulcher, he wished to teach us the nothingness of corporal man in the midst of his worldly pomp, and how the invisible man can transfigure life in his own light of love. Nature, exorcised of its ancient priapisms by the fire of Franciscan madness, surrendered from that time forth to the spiritual man, and by mystic paths thus il-

lumined even to the most remote horizons of the future, there later arrived two geniuses (or two saints) of Christian art: Cervantes in the poetry of the Renaissance and Beethoven in the music of our age—are archetypes of a single Christian inspiration.

BISHOP

You have brought me, my friend, to a point at which I do not know whether I ought to approve all that you have just said.

GUEST

You may give your approval, without danger, Your Grace.

BISHOP

I dare not do so at once.

GUEST

I am sorry, for we have for some time been in accord in our conversations, and I would not want us to close the last with a misunderstanding.

BISHOP

Nor do I wish it; but historical syntheses which are too schematic have always seemed to me somewhat suspicious.

GUEST

I think we have not been discussing history in the sense that is generally given to this word.

BISHOP

Then, what were you discussing?

GUEST

The spiritual life of man in its most mysterious sources, from which spring the living waters of Scripture, the high region of souls for which the chronology of historians is a negligible quantity.

BISHOP

But you have somewhat abruptly touched on Saint Francis, Cervantes, and Beethoven.

GUEST

They were men. . . .

BISHOP

That is not sufficient.

GUEST

And, perhaps, contemporaries in the mystery of their sorrow, their goodness, and their glory.

BISHOP

The one is a saint of our Church; the other two are not.

GUEST

They may come to be. . . .

BISHOP

I think not.

GUEST

Cervantes lost a hand in Lepanto, defending Christianity; he was a captive of the Moors in Algiers; he suffered unjust imprisonment in his own land, and at the close of such painful wanderings, wrote his mystical biography, creating a valiant

knight who translates the heroic piety of the gospel into action. Don Quixote, the hero of Christian knight-errantry, is the greatest disciple of Jesus, and, like his Master, was held to be mad. In the weaknesses of his flesh and in his ideal of absolute justice, serving men who did not recognize him, he brings to life the Spirit of Christ under the aspects of the poem.

BISHOP

You associate and disassociate ideas with fascinating subtlety, but I distrust your reasoning. . . .

GUEST

In regard to Beethoven, he lived in penury and never ceased to love mankind. Deaf though he was, he heard the music of God, of Nature, and of the Soul, with a clearness never before equaled, and revealed that sublime harmony to the heart of his brethren. Do you not see in all this a realization of Christianity? Above the suffering flesh is the mighty spirit which comes from higher worlds, bringing to earth the gift of delighting in beauty. For that reason I have compared Beethoven and Cervantes with the Saint of Assisi. Mysticism, poetry, and music have been, thanks to such men, the clearest æsthetic revelation which mankind can have of the invisible Christ.

BISHOP

I do not doubt the purity of your intentions, but, frankly, my son, you vex me with such extravagant ideas.

GUEST

Just as Don Quixote, with whom you compared me a moment ago, plagued the priest of La Mancha with his discourses.

BISHOP

Unfortunately, you reason like a madman.

GUEST

When one is reasoning about the hidden things of the soul, it is impossible to point out the limits which separate reason from madness.

BISHOP

Pardon me, and go on, for I want to listen to you to the end, since our conversation of to-night will be the last.

GUEST

I shall leave this house to-morrow, full of gratitude for the hospitality with which you have received me, and for the benevolence with which you have listened to me, and I do not know whether we shall again see each other; but I know that our talks will not be ended, because, although separated one from the other, I shall continue to discuss with you and you with me.

BISHOP

Go on, for you had something else to say to me.

GUEST

In the Museum Poldi Pezzoli, in Milan, I saw, some years ago, a dead "Christ," greenish in hue

and horrible to look at, like those of Mantegna and Holbein which are represented as reclining, and some child "Christs," painted by Luini and Beltraffio, in whose canvases the little God eagerly draws his food from the naked breast of the Virgin. From those extreme forms of realism Christian art ought to rise in spirituality, lighting up the flesh of Jesus with the reflection of his divine being, or extending itself to other arts in which the personality of the human God would no longer need to show itself under the form of a visible figure. Such is the profound mystery of Christian art and the mystical sense of what I told you two nights ago, when we were speaking of the image of Christ. But today, having already talked about the word of Christ, we can understand what the Spirit of Christ has given mankind in the mystery of æsthetic realization, which culminated in modern art.

BISHOP

Do you believe that modern man can understand that mystery, as you call it?

GUEST

Your Grace, I know an Italian drama which presents the story of the sinful woman; the members of the cast talk with Christ, but he does not appear in the scene; to the public there comes, only, in the most dramatic moment, *the voice of Christ,* as though he were an invisible person. And when he says: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," the stones fall from the hands of her accusers. Now, Your Grace, I have

seen the mixed and sensual public in a theater in Buenos Aires tremble as though it were a part of the drama, under the spell of that incorporeal voice, which came from afar and penetrated to the very depths of every conscience.

BISHOP

What you have just told me is very touching, and, believe me, in my provincial retreat, I would like to experience æsthetic emotions of such high morality.

GUEST

I have discovered something similar in the presentations of *Parsifal,* which is a kind of lay mass and reveals all the mystic profundity of Christian art, and even the extent of refinement which the present-day soul owes to the spiritual action of Christianity.

BISHOP

Art is merely an individual creation; morality is not, and much less politics by which it is known in history.

GUEST

Art is an individual revelation, but its work determines, by the emotion which it produces, forms of collective sensibility. All culture, in its original sources, is an individual creation, and that which appears to us in history in collective forms is nothing more than the result of individual conduct. The Spirit of Christ, incorporated to the individual life of each conscience, leads to the fraternity of all men, because the religious value of my own per-

sonality recognizes an identical value in the personality of all my fellow beings, and the invisible Christ thus shows himself as a single Divine Spirit in the soul of humanity. Before him, different religions and castes and races are fused into a single religion, a single caste, a single spiritual race. Christ, in the gospel, did not propose political reform, but individual reform through the reign of his Spirit in every man, knowing that as we realize this, the rest shall be added unto us.

BISHOP

Materialistic science has shut up the kingdom of God for the man of to-day.

GUEST

Knowledge may be purified in the ideal, and an example of this was given by a Newton, a Pascal, and a Pasteur. All true knowledge leads to the unity of the world and to the mystery of life. The mistakes of contemporary science arise merely from the fact that it denied that Unity and that Mystery. By reaffirming them, science would be purified, and God would recover his kingdom in the mental life.

BISHOP

If by chance such a thing should occur, we would still have the fetishism of machinery, as a regrettable legacy of materialistic science.

GUEST

Why do you consider machinery a regrettable legacy of science? Machines are, on the contrary, a discovery of the illumined spirit. They prove

the lordship of man over matter, and give new bodies to the spirit to dominate space and time, which limit it in the flesh. While humanity anterior to Christ discovered only fire and invented only the wheel, after Christ it has multiplied its discoveries until in our days it mocks the strength of the Titans and the power of the angels. The evil is not in the machine but in the man who controls it. What we need is the moral reform of mankind.

BISHOP

Two most insoluble difficulties oppose that reform to-day—sex and money; the erotic problem and the economic problem, the sources of the sensuality that is sinking the world into a new paganism.

GUEST

I do not believe in a new paganism, because paganism has died and can never return; but a new barbarism can return, as the work of unchained instincts. The sexual problem has, perhaps, been aggravated by the economic problem, and the economic problem, at the same time, is complicated with moral problems. The egoism of the capitalist has begotten the hatred of labor. Christian sentiment, as inspiration of life, would no doubt contribute toward peace in home and in society. The conservative instincts of the individual and of the species can be transformed into terrible scourges, and their tranquillity is to be found in love and justice.

BISHOP

In spite of it all, I do not see in what people of

the world a new hope might to-day be kindled. China, with its enigmatical seclusion; India, with its innumerable castes; Israel, with its exclusive Messianism, cannot to-day be the initiators of that new Christian realization. Europe, with its hatreds that have grown out of materialism and its forgetfulness of spiritual unity, cannot undertake it. Islam, with its fanaticism in full retreat, is still less suited to the task, as are also the United States with its capitalistic imperialism, and Japan with its Europeanism.

GUEST

On the other hand, I believe that our America, and in it our Argentina, is the country that is predestined to serve as a political vehicle for the realization of a new Christian ideal. Land which we have in excess and population that we lack, have here made possible the formation of a hospitable democracy; a democracy in which only individual values are taken into consideration, without prejudices of race, religion, or caste, so that the individual ought to come to feel himself in the full possession of his human possibilities, which are his divine possibilities. Every man is here a brother, although he comes from abroad, and every country, however distant it may be, is the home of other brothers, since they are also men. Our Constitution inspires this meaning of life, and it ought to animate all our institutions. The child is dormant future, woman is latent life; the working man is future labor, all of them capable of a possible creation, which demands institutions adequate to that possibility. If we realize such a pre-

destination, other countries will learn their destiny from us. To that end, we need to emancipate ourselves, spiritually, from the fanaticisms of Asia and the hatreds of Europe, in order to excel in the creation of the new man.

BISHOP

If you talked before as an artist, you now talk as a patriot, but I do not know whether a real Christian inspiration can be fed from such æsthetic or political sentiments.

GUEST

I spoke as an artist before because we were then treating of the images of Jesus, of Christian parables, and of all Christian art, and I speak to you now as a patriot because I have found in my country an appropriate medium for my own spiritual realization. Civic association in a democracy like ours can be a religious brotherhood, in the fullest sense of the word. The world in its tribulations awaits in darkness a message of hope—and it would be a great joy for us if that message could reach it from this Latin America of ours as a call to universal Christianity. Europe continues to bury her dead, and if this is the time announced by the prophecy of John, I would not wish it to be an Argentine city which the visionary of Patmos saw in the form of a woman, with a label on her forehead which said: *"Mystery: Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth."* You see, Your Grace, how æsthetic and political sen-

timents may feed a true Christian inspiration, or vice versa.

BISHOP

I see it now, but I wish you would make more definite the meaning of the quotation which you have just given from the *Apocalypse*.

GUEST

Your Grace, I believe that the *Apocalypse*, which means *The Revelation*, is a prophecy referring to our time, and that its signs point to the coming of the invisible Christ, the social Christ.

BISHOP

What a fantastic idea!

GUEST

Listen to me. Chapter nineteen describes the World War in complicated symbols, which verses seventeen and eighteen clear up in this way: "And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." This carnage coincides with the abominations of the woman and with the misfortunes of the merchants, the two greatest problems of our time, to which you yourself have referred.

BISHOP

It would be really terrible if by your mouth the Truth which is hidden in the book of the seven seals should be speaking at this moment.

GUEST

In the *Apocalypse,* Saint John says: "And there came one of the seven angels and carried me away into the desert. And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of this woman, and of the beast that carried her."

BISHOP

It frightens me to hear you.

GUEST

And that which the prophecy says in regard to economic tribulations is even more clear: "And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: the merchandise of gold, . . . and wheat, and beasts, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men."

BISHOP

And *souls of men.* . . .

GUEST

And the merchants in these things who became rich through them, will stand afar off, for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing and saying, "Alas! Alas! that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple and scarlet . . . for in one hour so great riches is come to naught." And every shipmaster and all the company in ships stood afar off, seeing the smoke of her burning, casting dust on their heads and crying, saying, "Alas! Alas! that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour she is made desolate." You remember, Your Grace, what follows these words.

BISHOP

Yes, I remember. But do not say it with such emphasis, for I would like to forget it.

GUEST

It is in verse twenty of chapter eighteen: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her." Thus cries Saint John, the loving apostle, the chosen disciple of Christ. He who gave the mystic key of the synoptics in the Gospel of the Word incarnate, announces in the book which he called *The Revelation,* the final destiny of Christianity. The *Apocalypse* prophesies the fall of the fearful, of unbe-

lievers, of fornicators, of idolaters, and this coincides with the description of a catastrophe such as that of the modern world and with the spiritual advent of Christ.

BISHOP

It makes my flesh creep to hear these words that have come down to us through the centuries, which were written in the Book of Life, with a feather torn from the wing of an eagle and dipped in the blood of the Lamb. I do not know whether my emotion is more stirred by the mysterious and sacerdotal tone of your voice, in the silence of this valley, with the dark hills silhouetted on the horizon and the Southern Cross gleaming like a candelabra of gold set in the heavens of the night; but I beg you, my friend, that we do not continue to speak in this way. Let us go, for it is already late. I want to pray to-night for peace on earth and good will among men, saying, as the Lord taught us, *"Adveniat regnum tuum. . . ."*

GUEST

Let us bear our crown of thorns with dignity, in the flesh of our foreheads, and let the living soul repose on the bosom of its Invisible Christ as we go forward to a work of Love.

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